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うらめしや Vol. VII

URAMESHIYA
ONE HUNDRED
GHOST STORIES

百物語

HEY, OYOU.
I'VE FINISHED PREPARING DINNER.
TONIGHT'S MEAL IS A BIT OF COLD MELON SOUP AND LIGHTLY SALTED SMALL EGGPLANT WITH RICE SOAKED IN WATER TO SOFTEN IT.
THIS WAY YOU'LL STILL HAVE A GOOD APPETITE EVEN THOUGH IT'S HOT AND HUMID EVERY DAY AND NIGHT.

HEY, YOU CAN'T JUST EAT WHENEVER YOU WANT, TOUKA!
CHOMP
CHOMP
HMM.
IT'S TOO SALTY AND THE TEXTURE IS NO GOOD.
FWOOSH
WHICH ONE SHOULD I EAT?
HEH HEH. THERE'S NO NEED TO BE SO STUFFY.
DAMMIT, YOU CAN'T JUST APPEAR OUT OF NOWHERE AND DECIDE ON YOUR OWN WHEN THE MEAL STARTS.
EXCUSE ME.
I'M SORRY TO BOTHER YOU SO LATE, BUT...

WOULD THIS HAPPEN TO BE THE RESIDENCE OF THE URAMESHIYA OYOU?
YES.
AND YOU ARE?
I AM THE WIFE OF GENROKU WHO LIVES IN YANAKA. MY NAME IS ONATSU.
I HAVE COME TONIGHT IN ORDER TO BEG A FAVOR OF OYOU.

...
IT'S FINE.
OYOU ...
THAT IS...
SHH.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
ONATSU WAS IT?
PLEASE COME INSIDE.
HOW CAN YOU PICKLE IT AND STILL HAVE SUCH A BEAUTIFUL COLOR?
THIS EGGPLANT LOOKS DELICIOUS!
OH MY!

CHOMP
CHOMP
DID YOU MAKE THIS?
OH, IT'S SO GOOD.
MY HUSBAND ALSO LOVES THIS...
WHEN YOU PICKLE IT, YOU ADD JUST A TOUCH OF ALUM -
OH, THAT IS SUCH A GREAT IDEA!
SMACK!
OW!
WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME!?
OH MY!
OH, I'VE DONE IT AGAIN.
SO, ONATSU ...
YOU NEEDED SOME-THING?
GASP
...
HE SAYS I GET SO CLUMSY WHEN I'M IN A HURRY.
MY HUSBAND IS ALWAYS TELLING ME THE EXACT SAME THING.
BUT IT JUST MAKES ME CUTER!
HEE.

MY HUSBAND, GENROKU, WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND HIS INVITATION TO OYOU.
WOULD YOU ACCOMPANY ME BACK TO MY HOME IN YANAKA?
OYOU ...
MY REQUEST IS THIS.
TONIGHT MY HUSBAND WOULD LIKE TO TELL GHOST STORIES.
WHY?
TO YANAKA, NOW?
IT IS A FAMOUS SCARY STORY.
THEY SAY IF YOU TELL GHOST STORIES AROUND A FIRE, SOMETHING STRANGE WILL SURELY COME.
YES.
GHOST STORIES ?
I'M CERTAIN THAT OYOU, WHO MAKES A LIVING FROM BEING A SPIRITUALLY POWERFUL URAMESHIYA,
WOULD KNOW MANY STRANGE AND FRIGHTENING TALES.

MY HUSBAND LOVES THINGS LIKE GHOSTS, MONSTERS, AND OTHER SIMILAR IDEAS.
OH NO.
THIS IS A BAD IDEA.
IT'S TOO BAD FOR THIS YOUNG LADY, BUT THAT IS AN IMPOSSIBLE REQUEST.
BUT IT'S SAD.
MY HUSBAND HAS NEVER SEEN A GHOST, MONSTER, OR ANYTHING WITH HIS OWN TWO EYES.
UP UNTIL NOW, SHE HAS BRUSQUELY SHOT DOWN EVERY REQUEST TO TELL A STRANGE STORY, OR ONE ABOUT GHOSTS, OR ONE ABOUT HER WORK.
SO HE IS GATHERING GHOST STORIES TONIGHT.
I ALREADY KNOW WHAT SHE'S GOING TO SAY.
AND WE THOUGHT THAT THE FABLED URAMESHIYA OYOU WOULD MAKE HIS WISH COME TRUE IF SHE SAT WITH US.
HE BELIEVES THAT HE WILL FINALLY SEE ONE OF THOSE STRANGE THINGS THAT IS SAID TO APPEAR AFTERWARD.

I'M SORRY.
I HATE PLAYING AROUND LIKE THAT MORE THAN ANYTHING IN THE WORLD.
THAT IS MY REQUEST.
OYOU, PLEASE HELP MY HUSBAND'S DREAM COME TRUE.
PLEASE JOIN US AS WE TELL GHOST STORIES AROUND A FIRE...
HUH?
DO YOU REALLY MEAN IT?
UNDER-STOOD.
I ACCEPT THIS JOB.
YES.
IT WILL BE A SIMPLE TASK.
AND I'M SURE MY HUSBAND WILL BE PLEASED.

THEN LET US HURRY.
LET'S LEAVE RIGHT AWAY.
TONIGHT IS A DARK NIGHT.
PLEASE BE CAREFUL OF WHERE YOU STEP.
WAI ...
WAIT, OYOU!
SAJI, YOU DON'T HAVE TO COME WITH.
WATCH THE HOUSE WITH TOUKA.
GRAB
THAT'S RIGHT, YOU CAN'T GO!
IT IS MY JOB TO PROTECT OYOU AND TRAVEL WITH HER AT ALL TIMES.
PLEASE TAKE ME ALONG AND LEAVE THIS USELESS MAN BEHIND.

I'M SO HAPPY.
YOU BOTH WILL BE COMING TO OUR HOUSE!
YOU IDIOT!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO STAYS BEHIND!
OBVIOUSLY THE ONE WHO IS ALWAYS AT OYOU'S SIDE IS ME, THE GREAT SAJI!
THERE'S NO HELPING IT.
THE MORE GUESTS WE HAVE, THE HAPPIER MY HUSBAND WILL BE.
...
I WON'T BE CONCERNED WITH THE CONSE-QUENCES.
OKAY, LET US ALL BE OFF.

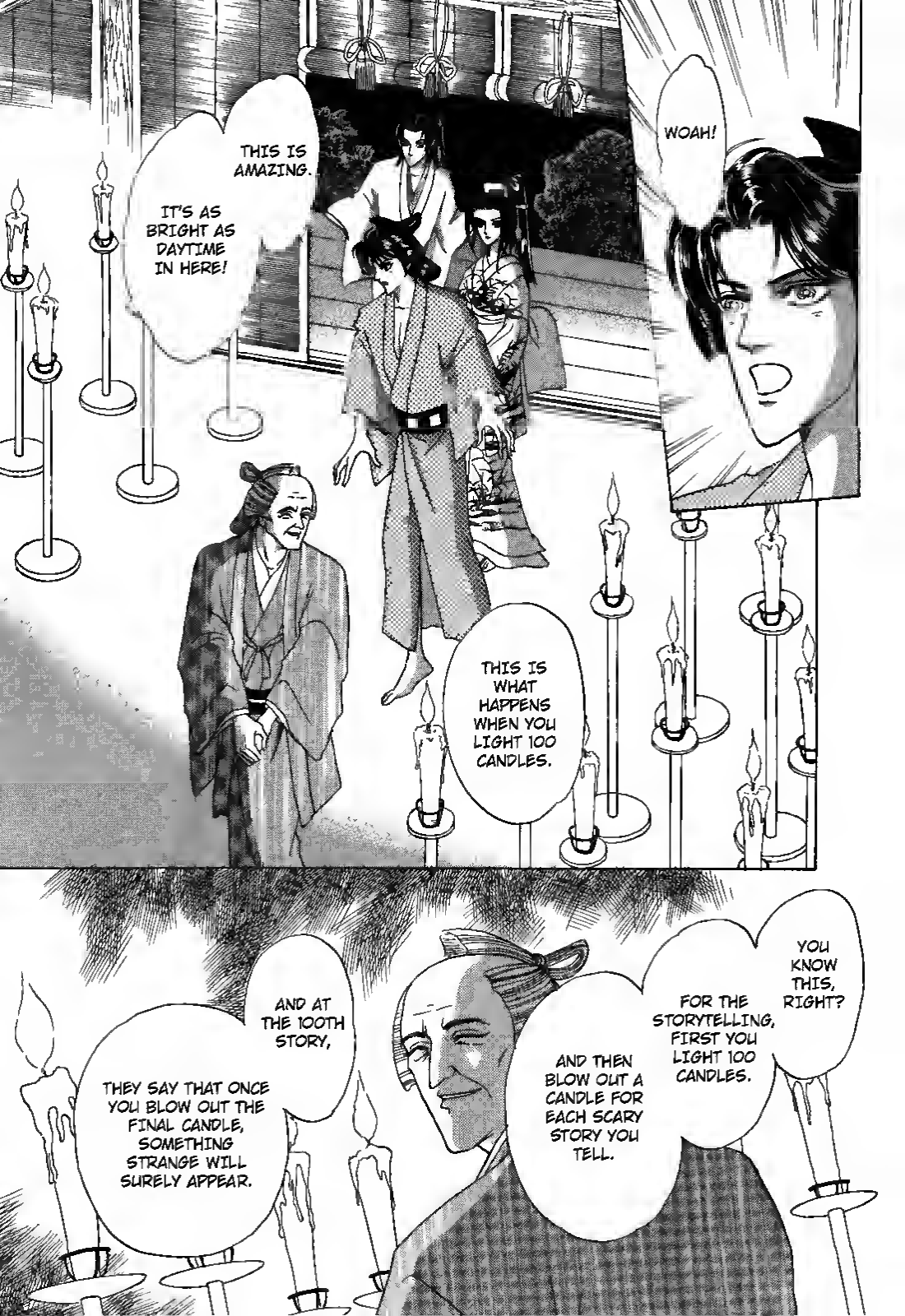
OYOU THE URAMESHIYA, FOREMOST IN SPIRITUAL POWERS, WHO FACES ANY AND ALL STRANGE OCCURANCES.
BUT TO ME, THE STRANGEST THING IN THE WORLD IS YOU YOURSELF...
OYOU.
OYOU.
I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND A WOMAN LIKE YOU.
I CAN'T WIN YOUR HEART.
FLIT
FIRE-FLIES ...?

WOW!
THEY'RE AMAZING...
AREN'T THEY?
THIS AREA IS FAMOUS FOR FIRE-FLIES.
BUT SOMEHOW THEY'RE A BIT CREEPY.
THAT IS NATURAL.
IT HAS BEEN SAID SINCE ANCIENT TIMES THAT THOSE WHO DIE WITH REGRET IN THEIR HEARTS BECOME FIREFLIES.
EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE SO PRETTY ...

SO YOU MEAN THEY'RE ALL THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED?
THEY MIGHT BE.
WOW!
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT EITHER
THAT WAS VERY INTER-ESTING!
OH, HOW HAPPY MY HUSBAND WILL BE WHEN HE TALKS TO YOU.
ONATSU, YOUR HUSBAND GENROKU SOUNDS LIKE A VERY GOOD MAN.
HUH?
EVER SINCE EARLIER, YOUR AFFECTION FOR HIM HAS BEEN WRITTEN ALL OVER YOUR FACE.
OH, MY.
HOW EMBAR-ASSING.
HEE
IF ONLY OYOU WERE AS EASY TO READ AS THIS WOMAN,
I WOULDN'T HAVE SO MUCH TROUBLE.

THIS IS OUR HOME
...
COME INSIDE NOW.

I'M GLAD THAT YOU HAVE COME.
I AM THE MASTER OF THIS HOUSE, GENROKU.
DARLING, ARE YOU THERE?
I HAVE BROUGHT THE URAMESHIYA OYOU.
OH,
SO SHE CAME.
OYOU'S AQUAINANCES, SAJI AND TOUKA.
I BROUGHT THEM THINKING BUSY PEOPLE LIKE THEM WOULD BE FUN.
OH, AND THESE TWO ARE...
WHAT IS WITH THIS DODDERING OLD MAN?
I ALREADY HAVE EVERYTHING SET UP FOR THE GHOST STORIES.
EVERYONE, COME INTO THE SITTING ROOM.
THEY'RE SO FAR APART IN AGE SHE LOOKS LIKE HIS GRAND-DAUGHTER.
WHICH IS STRANGER, THE GHOST STORIES OR HIM?
THIS IS THE HUSBAND ONATSU IS SO IN LOVE WITH?
HOW NICE.


WOAH!
THIS IS AMAZING.
IT'S AS BRIGHT AS DAYTIME IN HERE!
THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU LIGHT 100 CANDLES.
YOU KNOW THIS, RIGHT?
FOR THE STORYTELLING, FIRST YOU LIGHT 100 CANDLES.
AND THEN BLOW OUT A CANDLE FOR EACH SCARY STORY YOU TELL.
AND AT THE 100TH STORY,
THEY SAY THAT ONCE YOU BLOW OUT THE FINAL CANDLE, SOMETHING STRANGE WILL SURELY APPEAR.

IT WAS ONE YEAR AGO TODAY.
IT WAS ON THE 76TH STORY OF OUR GHOST STORY ROUND. THE FLAME OF A CANDLE STARTED TO SPREAD.
HAHA ...
THE TRUTH IS, WE HAVE HAD A FIRE BEFORE.
EVEN SO, ISN'T THIS A BIT DANGEROUS?
IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL YOU MIGHT START A FIRE.
LUCKILY THE FIRE WAS QUICKLY PUT OUT.
AND OUR IMPORTANT STORY WAS STOPPED PART WAY THROUGH...
I FEEL MORE REGRET ABOUT THAT THAN THE FIRE.
NOW,
PLEASE HELP YOUR-SELVES.
IT ISN'T MUCH, BUT I HAVE SOME SNACKS AND DRINKS FOR YOU.
BECAUSE WE HAVE THE INFAMOUS URAMESHIYA, OYOU, WITH US TONIGHT.
BUT A MISTAKE LIKE THAT WON'T HAPPEN TONIGHT.

GEN-ROKU.
THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT I HAVE MET THE TWO OF YOU.
HUH ...?
IT WAS AUTUMN THREE YEARS AGO.
WE MET ONCE ON THE BACK ROADS OF KOKUCHOU.
THIS IS QUITE EMBARA-SSING, BUT...
I WAS QUITE INTOXICATED, AS I HAD DRANK FAR TOO MUCH.
I HAD BEEN DRUNK SINCE THE EARLY AFTERNOON.
BEFORE I KNEW IT, I HAD FALLEN ASLEEP ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD.

SINCE ANCIENT TIMES IT HAS BEEN KNOWN THAT THE SIDE OF THE ROAD IS WHERE DEMONS TRAVEL UNSEEN BY HUMANS.
ARE YOU AWARE OF WHAT A TERRIBLE THING IT IS TO BE PASSED OUT OR ASLEEP ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, ON THE BARE GROUND?
AS USUAL,
DEMONS PASSED BEFORE MY EYES AS I LAY SLUMPED BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD.
BUT AT THE TIME,
I DIDN'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO SHAKE THEM OFF.
I WAS COMPLETELY AT THE MERCY OF THESE DEMONS, FEELING A SENSE OF DESPERATION, THAT IT DIDN'T MATTER WHAT DID OR DID NOT HAPPEN TO ME AT THAT POINT.

AT LAST IT SEEMED THE DEMONS THAT ONLY I COULD SEE WERE ABOUT TO COMPLETELY OVERTAKE ME.
PEOPLE PASSED ME BY, PRETENDING LIKE THEY DIDN'T SEE ME.
IF THAT HAD HAPPENED,
I KNEW MY WILLPOWER AND FATE AS A HUMAN WOULD BE PULLED OUT BY THE ROOTS.
BUT I STILL COULDN'T SUMMON THE WILL TO MOVE.
OR PERHAPS THEY KNEW I WAS THE URAMESHIYA OYOU AND HELD ILL WILL TOWARDS ME.
EXCUSE ME, MISS?
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
WOOSH
DO YOU FEEL UNWELL?
THE DEMONS COWERED FROM THE LIGHT EMITTED FROM YOUR KIND WORDS AND WERE ALL ERADICATED AT ONCE.

I WAS FINALLY ABLE TO REGAIN MY WITS.
BECAUSE YOU CALLED OUT TO ME,
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
I FEEL BETTER ALREADY.
SOMEONE OUT THERE WANTED TO DO SUCH A THING FOR ME.
OH,
WOULD YOU LIKE TO REST A BIT WITH US?
OUR HOME IS IN THIS AREA.
WE ARE CERTAINLY NOT SUSPICIOUS PEOPLE OR ANYTHING.
I'M GENROKU OF THE PAWN SHOP NEARBY, AND THIS IS MY WIFE, ONATSU.
I HAD FALLEN BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD HAVING THOUGHT I WOULD BANISH THE DEMONS MYSELF LIKE A SPOILT CHILD.
EVEN SUCH A SMALL THING THAT YOU MAY FORGET YOU DID LATER...
MAY UNEXPECTEDLY BE A FEAT THAT SAVES SOMEONE'S LIFE.
HMM. ...
I CAN'T QUITE SEEM TO RECALL AN EVENT LIKE THIS.

YOU MAY DEPEND ON ME, GENROKU AND ONATSU.
I, THE URAMESHIYA OYOU, WILL CERTAINLY MAKE YOUR WISH COME TRUE.
WE WILL BE ABLE TO TELL ALL ONE HUNDRED STORIES SAFELY.
I ALWAYS HOPED I WOULD BE ABLE TO REPAY YOUR KINDNESS.
AFTER THAT, I OCCASIONALLY HEARD WORD OF YOU TWO.
ONA-TSU?
IT LOOKS LIKE OYOU
HAS ALREADY SHARED THE FIRST STORY.
FOOSH
OH, WHAT LUCK!
WITH OYOU ON OUR SIDE, WE WILL HAVE THE STRENGTH OF AN ARMY.
WE'RE COUNT-ING ON YOU.
SO THAT IS WHY WE'RE HERE...
OYOU.
I GET IT.
HA HA HA
OH, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, SHE DID!

OKAY.
WELL THEN, YOU SHOULD TELL THE NEXT STORY.
AS AN EXAMPLE.
THIS STORY IS A LITTLE OLD.
IN A SMALL VILLAGE IN THE KINGDOM OF SAGAMI, A CHILD WAS BORN TO THE YOUNG COUPLE WHO RAN THE TOFU SHOP.
BUT HER RECOVERY AFTER THE BIRTH WAS POOR, AND SHE DIED SOON AFTERWARD.
THE YOUNG FATHER HELD HIS CHILD AND BY DESPERATELY SEEKING DONATIONS OF MILK, MANAGED TO RAISE HIS BABY.
BUT DESPITE THIS, THE CHILD GREW WEAKER WITH EVERY PASSING DAY.
HOLDING HIS CHILD WHO SOBBED, WANTING MILK, THE FATHER WAS ASKING WHY...

AT THIS RATE, YOU TOO WILL SOON BE GOING TO JOIN YOUR MOTHER.
AFTER WE BROUGHT YOU INTO THIS WORLD...
YOU PITIFUL CHILD.
THAT NIGHT,
THE FATHER AWAKENED, HAVING THOUGHT HE FELT SOMETHING.
THE SILHOUETTE OF THE WOMAN FEEDING HIS CHILD
LOOKED JUST LIKE HIS LATE WIFE...

UNABLE TO SPEAK, AS THE MAN WATCHED THE SCENE UNFOLD BEFORE HIS EYES,
THE WOMAN FINISHED FEEDING THE CHILD,
AND LEFT QUICKLY THROUGH ONLY A SMALL GAP IN THE SCREEN DOOR.
BY THE WAY, THE CHILD MENTIONED IN THIS STORY IS IN FACT ONATSU HERSELF.
FROM THEN ON, THE GHOST OF HIS WIFE WOULD APPEAR EVERY NIGHT TO FEED THE CHILD UNTIL ITS TEETH BEGAN COMING IN.
IT'S NATURAL THAT YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME.
THE FIRST TIME I HEARD THIS STORY I SIMPLY LAUGHED AT HER.

UNTIL A FEW YEARS AGO I WAS FAMOUS FOR BEING A STINGY OWNER OF A PAWN SHOP.
EVEN STRICT ON HOW MUCH TOILET PAPER EMPLOYEES COULD USE.
COMPLAINING ABOUT WHAT CUSTOMERS BROUGHT IN AND NOT WANTING TO HAND OUT MONEY.
I BELIEVE I WAS BECOMING A CRUEL OLD MAN.
I HAD NO FAMILY AND SINCE I WAS YOUNG HAD ONLY CARED ABOUT MONEY.
I DIDN'T CARE ABOUT OTHERS, ONLY ABOUT GETTING MY HANDS ON MORE MONEY.
COMPLETELY ABSORBED IN THAT PURPOSE, AND UNCARING ABOUT THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS, I HAD BECOME AN OLD MAN WHO WAS HATED BY ALL.
THEN, I MET ONATSU WHO CAME TO WORK FOR ME THROUGH AN EMPLOYMENT AGENCY.
FROM THE BEGINNING SHE WAS A GOOD GIRL WHO DID NOT BALK AT MY SCOLDING BUT WORKED TIRELESSLY.
ONE DAY I HAPPENED TO ASK HER A QUSTION.
WHAT WAS YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER LIKE?
THAT IS WHEN SHE TOLD ME THE GHOST STORY YOU JUST HEARD.

BUT BESIDES THAT, I WAS FEELING A STRANGE, EXCITING SENSATION.
I DISMISSED HER WITH A LAUGH.
THINKING ABOUT IT, BEFORE THEN, I HAD NEVER MET ANYONE BEFORE WHO HAD TOLD ME ANY SCARY STORIES.
THIS IS A STORY MY FATHER TOLD ME JUST BEFORE HE PASSED AWAY.
SO IT IS NOT A LIE.
ONATSU.
YES?
DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW ANY OTHER SCARY STORIES?
YES, SIR.
I LOVE SCARY STORIES.
I FEEL LIKE I AM SOMEHOW CONECTED TO MY MOTHER WHEN I TELL STORIES LIKE THAT.
MY MOTHER WORRIED ABOUT ME EVEN AFTER SHE BECAME A SPIRIT.
THAT THOUGHT ALONE KEEPS ME GOING.
IT IS A VERY TENDER FEELING.

AFTER THAT, I HAD ONATSU TELL ME EVERY GHOST STORY THAT SHE KNEW.
AFTER THAT, I TOO, COMPLETELY FELL IN LOVE WITH THAT WORLD.
ONATSU INTRODUCED WATER TO THE DRIED UP HEART OF AN OLD MAN WHO DID NOT PLAY AND DID NOT KNOW WHAT FUN WAS.
SOMEHOW, SHE TURNED ME INTO A PERSON WHOSE EYES GLITTER WHEN THEY HEAR SCARY STORIES, LIKE A YOUNG CHILD WOULD.
OVER TIME, TALKING TO SOMEONE LIKE HER BECAME THE MOST FUN PART OF MY LIFE.
SOON AFTER THAT I MADE HER MY WIFE.
I GAVE UP ON MY SHOP, CLOSED IT, AND THEN WE MOVED TO THIS HOUSE.
WE LIVE HERE NOW COMFORTABLY IN RETIREMENT ...
AS YOU WOULD EXPECT, BY ENJOYING SCARY STORIES.
OOPS, I REALIZE I HAVE GONE ON MUCH LONGER THAN I SHOULD HAVE.
ONA-TSU.
YES.
FOOSH

NOW, WHO'S TURN IS IT NEXT?
YOU ARE SAJI YES?
DO YOU KNOW ANY SCARY STORIES?
UH, WELL, NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT, I'M A GUY WHO LIKES HIS FUN...
SAJI ?
AND TO BE HONEST I ENJOY GAMBLING ...
IT'S BEEN NOTHING BUT THE STUFF OF HORROR STORIES.
NO MATTER IF I DO OR NOT, EVER SINCE I MET OYOU...
THAT'S IT.
YES, I WAS IN A GAMBLING DEN IN SUDA NOT TOO LONG AGO...
THROW!
TWO FOURS!

NO, IT'S NOT THAT BAD.
IF YOU WANT WE CAN ROTATE A BIT?
IF I LOSE ONCE MORE I'LL BE DONE FOR THE NIGHT.
USUALLY YOU GET MORE SERIOUS THE MORE YOU LOSE.
THAT'S NOT LIKE YOU AT ALL.
YOU'RE UNLUCKY, AREN'T YOU SAJI?
DAMN, LOST AGAIN.
FOR WHATEVER REASON LATELY I JUST CAN'T GET INTO GAMBLING ANY MORE
I KNEW WHY.
LATELY BECAUSE OF OYOU I HAVEN'T BEEN INTERESTED IN GAMBLING, IT JUST DOESN'T GIVE ME THE SAME RUSH.
THIS IS PRETTY LUKE-WARM.
DID YOU KNOW?
A MAN NAMED SADAKICHI FROM YAOYA GOT HOOKED ON GAMBLING. HIS DEBTS PILED UP SO HIGH HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.
JUST A SHORT TIME AGO HE HUNG HIMSELF.
WELL, MAYBE YOU'RE JUST GETTING WISE.
OH YEAH?

AT THAT MOMENT I FELT A PRESENCE, SO I RAISED MY HEAD, AND TO MY SURPRISE...
SADAKICHI OF YAOYA, THE SUBJECT OF ALL THESE RUMORS, WAS SITTING BEFORE MY VERY EYES.
HE GAZED AT MY FACE BLANKLY
AND MUTTERED SOMETHING QUIETLY.
IT WILL BE 5 AND 2.
NEXT IS 5 AND 2...
NEXT TIME IT'LL BE ODD, RIGHT?
5 AND 2...
OKAY, I BET IT WILL BE ODD!
THROW!
THREE AND ONE!

I THINK I FINALLY UNDERSTAND WHY YOU HUNG YOURSELF.
HAHA, YOU LOST BIG TIME, SAJI.
PPT
AS I LEFT I SAID THIS TO SADAKICHI WITHOUT THINKING...
FUNNY.
THE GHOST OF SADAKICHI WAS PITIFUL BUT YOUR STORY WAS INTERESTING.
OH MY, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT...
SCARY STORIES ARE GOOD.
THERE IS NOTHING AS INTERES-TING AS A SCARY STORY.
SCARY, STRONG, WEAK, HAPPY, SAD, HATED, BELOVED, STUPID, AND SMART...
ALL OF THESE HUMAN FEELINGS AND MORE ARE HELD TIGHTLY IN THE VESSEL KNOWN AS THE STRANGE.

...
... BUT THAT MIGHT BE EXACTLY WHY WE HAVE TRIED TO CHASE IT SO FAR.
THE MORE YOU THINK YOU KNOW, THE LESS YOU UNDER-STAND.
TRULY THE REALM OF THE STRANGE RUNS VERY DEEP.
MAY VERY WELL BE THE SAME AS SAYING YOU LIKE PEOPLE.
IN FACT, SAYING YOU LIKE SCARY STORIES
THAT MAY BE TRUE.
ABOUT MY FEELINGS FOR OYOU AS WELL...
EXCUSE ME, I NEED TO USE THE REST-ROOM.
YES, IT'S JUST PAST THE HALLWAY.
FOOSH!
OKAY, WHO'S NEXT?
ME!
ME!
I WILL TELL YOU THE BEST OF THE STORIES ABOUT FOXES IN DISGUISE!
AND THEN, THE MAN, NOT KNOWING HIS OWN MOTHER WAS A FOX...
AH HA HA

GHOST STORIES ...
WERE SUPPOSED TO BE DARK AND GLOOMY, I THOUGHT.
BUT...
WHAT IS WITH THE STRANGE BRIGHTNESS OF THAT COUPLE?
SWIP
OH, SORRY.
SPLASH
AND OYOU, TOO...
PUTTING ON SUCH AN ODDLY CALM AND SWEET FACE...

...
SMIRK
WAAGH!
SAJI ?
IT... WAS HERE!
IT WAS!
RIGHT HERE ...
A WOMAN UPSIDE DOWN AND COVERED IN BLOOD...
EVEN THOUGH WE HAVEN'T TOLD 100 STORIES YET...
IT WAS HERE!

OH,
SO YOU SAW HER TOO, SAJI?
THAT'S RIGHT.
THIS HOUSE HAS LONG BEEN RUMORED AS BEING HAUNTED
HUH ...?
THEY WERE HAVING TROUBLE FINDING A BUYER
BUT WE GLADLY BOUGHT IT AND MOVED RIGHT IN.
IT SEEMS I DO NOT HAVE THE POWER AT ALL...
SO I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM ONCE
I RAN IN A PANIC TO WAKE UP MY HUSBAND BUT...
BY THEN THE SPIRTS HAD ALL DISAPPEARED.
THOUGH YES. SOME-TIMES I SEE THEM.
FOR EXAMPLE I OPENED MY EYES ONE NIGHT AND LOOKED AT THE CEILING...
IT WAS PACKED WITH FACES

YES, THEY SAY THAT BEING NEAR SOMEONE WITH LOT OF SPIRITUAL POWER MAY RESULT IN THAT POWER BEING PASSED OVER.
AND SO I HOPE THAT I, TOO, WILL BE ABLE TO SEE THEM AFTER TONIGHT.
I LOOK FORWARD TO IT.
BUT CONSIDERING YOUR STORY EARLIER, YOU MUST BE ABLE TO SEE SPIRITS AS WELL, SAJI.
I'M JEAL-OUS.
WELL, I DON'T SEE THEM BECAUSE I ENJOY IT.
IT STARTED AFTER I BEGAN MEETING WITH OYOU...
BY MY AGE, HAVING A GOOD WIFE LIKE ONATSU AND BEING ABLE TO LIVE COMFORTABLY...
I ONLY HAVE ONE OTHER DESIRE.
... I JUST DON'T GET IT.
YOU WANT TO SEE IT THAT BADLY?
YES, I DO.
THEY GAVE ME BACK MY HUMAN HEART.
I WANT TO FEEL THE SPIRITS I HOLD SO DEAR WITH MY VERY BODY.

I REALLY BELIEVE THAT SO LONG AS THAT WISH IS UNFUL-FILLED
EVEN IF I DIED I WOULDN'T DIE COMPLETELY.
THAT'S IT.
SPEAKING OF NOT DYING COMPLETELY ...
I KNOW A FEW GOOD STOIRES ABOUT SPIRITS WHO CAN'T REACH NIRVANA.
A YOUNG MONK FELL DEATHLY ILL AT THE TEMPLE.
AND AFTER THAT IT SEEMED THE SPIRIT OF THE MONK WOULD APPEAR IN A CERTAIN ROOM EVERY NIGHT.
THAT YOUNG MONK MAY HAVE FELT GUILTY ABOUT THE EROTICA, AND BECAUSE OF THIS, WAS UNABLE TO ASCEND TO NIRVANA.
AT THE TEMPLE THEY SAID PRAYERS AND INCANTATIONS TO HELP THE SPIRIT OF A MONK GET TO NIRVANA, BUT TO NO AVAIL.
SO THEY TRIED PEELING UP THE FLOOR IN THE ROOM THIS SPIRIT APPEARED IN.
AND FOUND EROTICA HIDDEN UNDERNEATH.

THAT REMINDS ME.
I HAD AN EXPERIENCE LIKE THAT AS WELL.
THE LANDLORD OF A TENEMENT HOUSE CAME FOR MY COUNCIL.
HE WAS TROUBLED BY A SPIRIT THAT APPEARED NEAR THE WELL.
IT WAS THE SPIRIT OF THE CARPENTER'S WIFE WHO PASSED THE DAY BEFORE.
PLEASE DO SOME-THING, HE SAID.
THERE WAS INDEED THE WIFE'S SPIRIT FLOATING AIMLESSLY BY THE WELL.
BOWL...
AND SHE COULD SAY ONLY ONE WORD TO ME.
AFTERWARD, ONCE WE DRAINED THE WELL, WE FOUND A CHIPPED, CRUDE BOWL.
WHILE SHE WAS ALIVE, THE WOMAN HAD DROPPED THE BOWL INTO THE WELL ON SOME IMPULSE.
IT WEIGHED ON HER MIND SO MUCH
SHE WAS UNABLE TO MOVE ON.

THIS IS A STRANGELY BRIGHT CELEBRATION OF GHOST STORIES...
HUMANS LIKE THAT WHO CAN'T MOVE ON DUE TO SILLY THINGS LIKE EROTICA OR BOWLS ARE SUCH STUPID CREATURES.
THAT IS WHAT'S INTER-ESTING ABOUT PEOPLE.
YES.
I CAN UNDERSTAND THE FEELINGS OF THESE SPIRITS VERY WELL.
WELL, WHO IS NEXT?
OH, WAIT, WAIT.
I HAVE TO BLOW OUT A CANDLE.
IF WE KEEP TELLING STORIES ONE AFTER ANOTHER
WE'LL LOSE OUR PLACE!
OH, SO SORRY.
FOOSH!

THE DARKNESS BECAME DEEPER AND DEEPER...
AS WE BLEW OUT THE CANDLES ONE AFTER ANOTHER ...
AND SO THE STORIES CONTINUED ON...
THIS TIME WE WILL BE FINE.
I AM HERE.
LAST TIME THIS I WHEN THE FIRE STARTED.
NEXT IS THE 76TH STORY THAT CAUSED US TROUBLE LAST TIME.
...
CONTINUE THE STORIES WITHOUT WORRY.

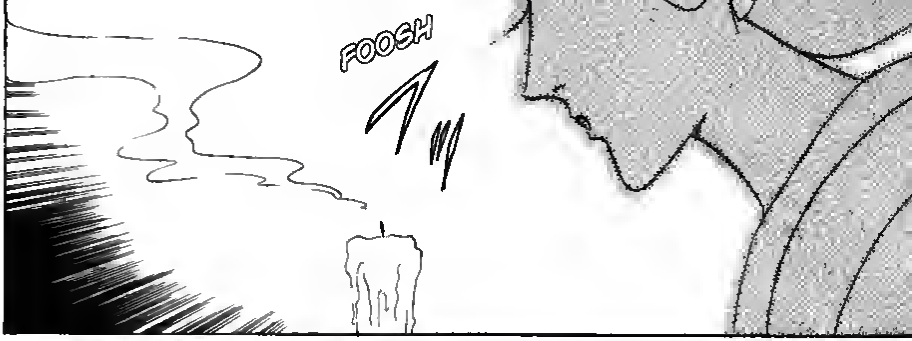
A LONG TIME AGO, A MAN WHO LIVED IN THE VILLAGE OF JOUSHUU OWNED A CAT.
HE WAS A LARGE ORANGE CAT WHO HAD LIVED FOR 10 YEARS.
THEN, I AM NEXT.
SPUTTER
THE CAT WAS INNOCENTLY CHASING AFTER BIRDS IN FRONT OF THE MAN AS HE NAPPED ON THE VERANDA.

SPLUTTER
LEAVE.
LEAVE.
TONIGHT YOU DO NOT GET TO DO AS YOU WISH.
G
W
A
A

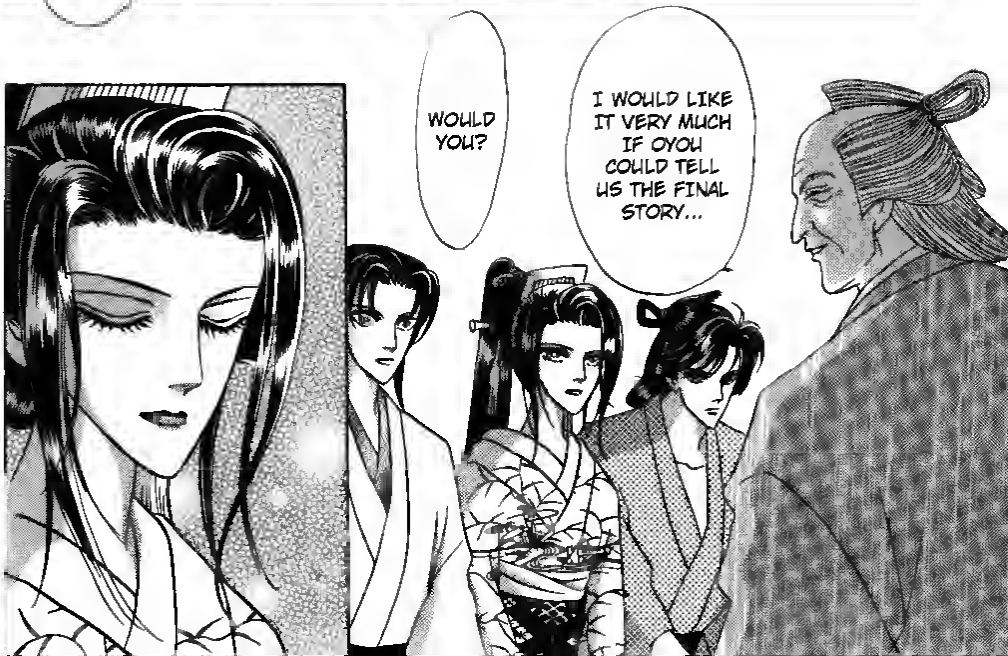
... AND THEN,
THE MAN HEARD THE CAT ACCIDENTALLY LET A FEW WORDS SLIP AFTER CARELESSLY LETTING THE BIRD GET AWAY.
THAT'S TOO BAD.
BAH.
AFTER THAT, THE CAT SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED AND WAS NEVER SEEN BY THE MAN AGAIN.
PHEW
OYOU ...?
IT'S NOTHING.

NOW,
IT'S YOUR TURN NEXT, TOUKA.
OKAY.
IN THAT CASE, I HAVE A STORY ABOUT A FOX WHO MARRIED INTO A FEUDAL LORD'S FAMILY...
ALL OF TOUKA'S STORIES ARE ABOUT FOXES.
...
THE TALES CONTINUED.
80 STORIES ...
AND THE DARKNESS GREW DEEPER.

90 STORIES ...
THE DARKNESS GREW DEEPER AND DEEPER...


FOOSH

ONLY ONE REMAINS.
WE'RE AT THE FINAL STORY AT LAST.
TIME SURELY FLIES WHEN YOU HAVE FUN.
WE'RE ALREADY AT STORY NUMBER 99...


WOULD YOU?
I WOULD LIKE IT VERY MUCH IF OYOU COULD TELL US THE FINAL STORY...

IT TAKES PLACE EXACTLY ONE YEAR AGO.
THE PLACE IS ALSO THIS VERY VILLAGE.
THE FAMILY THERE WAS ALSO THROWING A FEAST AND TELLING ONE HUNDRED GHOST STORIES.
A HUSBAND AND WIFE AND MANY OF THEIR INVITED GUESTS...
THE STORIES FLOWED, AND THE GROUP WAS EXCITED.
BUT PERHAPS DUE TO SOME OVERSIGHT ONE OF THE FLAMES OF THE STANDING CANDLES CAUGHT IN THE YOUNG WIF'ES HAIR...
HER HUSBAND RAN TO HELP HIS WIFE, BUT THE FIRE SUDDENLY SPREAD TO HIM AS WELL.
THEIR GUESTS, NOT KNOWING WHAT ELSE TO DO, COULD ONLY RUN AWAY.

AND SO THE HOUSE BURNED DOWN.
AND SADLY, THE MARRIED COUPLE BURNED TO DEATH IN THE HOUSE AS WELL.
OYOU ...
A YEAR PASSED.
ON THE VERY SAME NIGHT OF THE FIRE...
...
THE ONE WHO CAME TO VISIT ME AT MY HOME WAS WITHOUT A DOUBT THE YOUNG WIFE WHO HAD CERTAINLY BURNED TO DEATH...

FOOSH
AND SO SHE ASKED
FOR THE SAKE OF HER HUSBAND THAT TONIGHT WE TELL ALL OF THE STORIES.
THEIR ONE HUNDRED STORIES HAD BEEN CUT OFF AT NUMBER 76.
SPLITTER
SPLUTTER
THIS MAKES 100.
WHAT A JOYOUS ENDING.

THANK YOU,
OYOU.
THANK YOU...

...
WAAGH?
WHA...
WHAT THE...
WHAT HAPPENED HERE...?
THIS IS THE REMAINS OF THEIR HOME WHICH BURNED DOWN ONE YEAR AGO.

THEY SAY IF YOU TELL ONE HUNDRED GHOST STORIES, SOMETHING STRANGE WILL SURELY COME.
AND SO, IN THE VERY END, THE TWO OF THEM BECAME THAT STRANGE THING THAT THEY SO ADORED.
I'M SURE GENROKU AND ONATSU ARE NOW SATISFIED.
...
NOW THEN, IT SHOULD BE DAWN SOON.
WE SHOULD HEAD HOME.
W-WAIT, OYOU!

SO YOU ONLY JUST NOTICED?
FOOL.
OYOU AND I KNEW ABOUT IT THE WHOOOLE TIME, OF COURSE.
WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
YOU MEAN THAT THEY WERE DEAD FROM THE START...?
IF YOU TELL 100 GHOST STORIES, IN THE DARKNESS...
SOMETHING STRANGE WILL SURELY COME.
FLIT
フワ
...
HEY,
OYOU, WHY DON'T YOU LEAVE THAT MORON BEHIND?
LET'S GO, LET'S GO.

PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME BEHIND!
OYOU! PLEASE WAIT FOR ME!
WAAGH!
THANK YOU.

THANK YOU.
OYOU ...

片見の月

うらめしや Vol. VIII

URAMESHIYA

THE OMEN

TONIGHT IS THE 13TH NIGHT OF THE MONTH.
LET'S TAKE OUR TIME WITH SOME DRINKS.
LOOK, OYOU.
A BEAUTIFUL MOON HAS RISEN.
THE MENU TONIGHT IS TARO GRILLED IN SOY SAUCE, EDAMAME ...
EGGPLANT AND MISO-TOFU WITH RED BEAN JAM ...
AND WE HAVE PLENTY OF SAKE.
MY, SAJI.
YOU'RE CERTAINLY IN GOOD SPIRITS TONIGHT.

THAT I AM.
TONIGHT THAT ANNOYING BASTARD TOUKA IS AWAY BACK AT HIS HOME IN INARIYAMA.
WE GET TO EAT ALONE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A WHILE.
HOW COULD I NOT BE IN A GOOD MOOD?
ESPECIALLY IF A COUPLE ARE TOGETHER ON THE NIGHT OF THE 15TH...
THEY SAY THE TWO MUST ALSO BE TOGETHER ON THE NIGHT OF THE 13TH.
OH, DID YOU KNOW, OYOU?
IF YOU SEE THE MOON ON AUGUST 15TH, YOU MUST ALSO SEE THE MOON ON SEPTEMBER 13TH, OR ELSE IT'S A BAD OMEN.
IF YOU DON'T SEE BOTH, TRAGEDY WILL BEFALL YOU.
HMPH.
THAT'S SUPER-STITION.
OH, IT'S FINE.
IT'S THE JUDG-MENT OF THE MOON.

H-
HELP ME!
HELP ...
HE-
PANT
PANT
PANT
PANT
OYOU THE URA-MESHI-YA...
MM ...?
LAST MONTH WE GOT THEM FROM ZENKICHI'S DUMPLING CART.
I DIDN'T GO TO HIM THIS TIME.
WHAT'S WRONG?
THESE MOON-VIEWING DUMPLINGS ARE AWFUL.
THOUGH THE ONES FOR THE 15TH WERE VERY GOOD...
I HAD PLANNED ON IT.
BUT ...
SORRY. I MADE THOSE DUMPLINGS MYSELF.

DUMPLINGS
SOMETHING SEEMED FISHY.
ZENKICHI WAS AN HONEST HARD WORKER, AND A GOOD MAN.
TO THINK THAT HE'D DIE BECAUSE HE WAS GOING TO SEE A WHORE IS JUST...
ZENKICHI THE DUMPLING MAKER?
YES, HE USUALLY SETS UP HIS CART AROUND HERE.
YOUNG MAN, YOU DIDN'T HEAR?
ZENKICHI HAS PASSED AWAY. IT WAS 10 DAYS AGO.
HE WENT TO CALL ON A WOMAN OF THE RED-LIGHT DISTRICT* IN BENTEN CITY.
ON THE WAY HE FELL OFF A BANK AND DIED THERE IN THE DITCH.
IT LOOKED LIKE HE HIT A POST OR SOMETHING ON THE WAY DOWN
HALF OF HIS FACE WAS DEEPLY SLASHED... IT WAS A MISERABLE DEATH.
* IN THE EDO PERIOD, THIS WAS THE ONLY BROTHEL ALLOWED BY THE SHOGUNATE BESIDES THE ONE IN YOSHIHARA
BAM
IT'S... HORRIBLE ... HELP!
HELP!
BAM
BAM
OYOU!
BAM
OPEN UP!
THIS IS IMPORTANT!
BAM
BAM
BAM

JUST CALM DOWN A LITTLE.
WHO ARE YOU?
AND JUST WHAT IS THE MATTER?
AH...
H-
HELP!
PLEASE HELP!
SQUEEZE
IF YOU POUND ON THE DOOR THAT HARD YOU'LL BREAK IT!
WHAT IS IT?
RATTLE
YOU HAVE TO HURRY.
WE'LL ALL BE KILLED BY THE SPIRIT ...
YOU'RE OYOU THE URAMESHIYA, RIGHT?
P;- PLEASE HELP ME ...
...
WE'LL ALL BE KILLED BY THE SPIRIT OF THAT DUMPLING-MAKER ZENKICHI!

I'M JUST A YOUNG GUARD FROM A BROTHEL IN BENTEN'S RED LIGHT DISTRICT.
TO-TONIGHT'S MOON IS A BAD OMEN.
AND ZENKICHI'S GHOST HAS APPEARED ...
MY BOSS TORAZOU AND THE WOMEN COULDN'T GET AWAY ...
I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD ESCAPE.
I THOUGHT I WOULD TRY ASKING THE URAMESHIYA FOR HELP, AS I'VE HEARD RUMORS...
BUT I'VE BEEN ABSORBED IN MYSELF.
WHAT NOW ?
TH-THAT OVER THERE IS BENTEN'S RED LIGHT DISTRICT.
I... I WILL HAVE TO EXCUSE MYSELF HERE...
I DON'T WANNA GO BACK THERE...
THE BROTHEL IS OVER THERE.
IT'S... IT'S STRAIGHT AHEAD, YOU'LL SEE IT SOON.
...

YOU COULD SEE THAT EVEN THAT ROUGH GUY WAS FRIGHTENED.
THIS ISN'T A SMALL MATTER, OYOU.
THAT IS WHY WE ARE HERE.
BUT I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE THAT THE KINDLY ZENKICHI WOULD BECOME A GHOST...
AND HAUNT THIS BROTHEL.
AND SO THAT IS WHY WE HAVE COME TO CONFIRM.
WHAT'S WRONG, OYOU?
YOU SEEM LIKE YOU'RE IN A BAD MOOD.
HMPH.
ANY WOMAN WOULD BE UPSET IF SHE HAD TO COME TO A PLACE LIKE THIS.

A BROTHEL IN THE RED LIGHT DISTRICT MAY BE FUN FOR MEN, BUT FOR WOMEN, IT'S A LIVING HELL.
THE MALICE OF THESE WOMEN WHO CANNOT SPEAK OUT SPIRALS WITHIN THIS PLACE.
THEY SELL THEIR BODIES FOR MONEY, WORKING DAY AND NIGHT.
MOST WOMEN'S YOUNG BODIES FALL ILL IN THEIR TWENTIES AND THEY PASS AWAY.
THE NUMBER OF WOMEN WHO SURVIVE TO SERVE OUT THE LENGTH OF THEIR CONTRACTS ARE VERY FEW.
...

IT SEEMS THIS IS THE BROTHEL WITH THE ISSUE.
IT IS STRANGE.
THE DOOR IS SHUT AND NO LAMPS ARE LIT.
MOON VIEWING NIGHTS ARE WHEN BROTHELS HAVE THE MOST BUSINESS.
HUH, IS THIS ONE CLOSED?
HOLD UP, YOU SHOULDN'T GO OVER THERE.
THERE'S A RUMOR THAT IT WILL GET YOU IF YOU GO NEAR THAT BROTHEL!
YEAH, THIS IS GIVING ME A WEIRD FEELING.
HEAVEN PROTECT US!

IT WON'T OPEN?
THERE MAY BE SOMETHING PROPPED UP TO KEEP IT SHUT.
... NO.
CLCK
OYOU ...
THERE IS DEFINITELY SOMETHING SEALING THIS PLACE UP.
TO KEEP THOSE INSIDE FROM LEAVING
AND TO KEEP OTHERS OUT...
BY SOMETHING DO YOU MEAN ZENKICHI?
I... CAN'T BE SURE OF THAT YET.
DEMONS, HERETICS, THOSE AGAINST BUDDHA, I COMPLETE THE PATH TO OBSTRUCT YOU.
BUT,
IT IS CERTAIN THAT IT IS SOMETHING OF A FOUL NATURE
THE WORLD OF DEMONS AND OF BUDDHA, BOTH ARE TRUE. COMPLETELY EQUAL AND ONE IN THE SAME ...
BZZZZZT

SLAM
YOU WILL WAIT OUTSIDE.
THERE'S NO WAY I WILL.
DON'T COME IN.
OYOU?
WHAT HAPPENED?
RATTLE

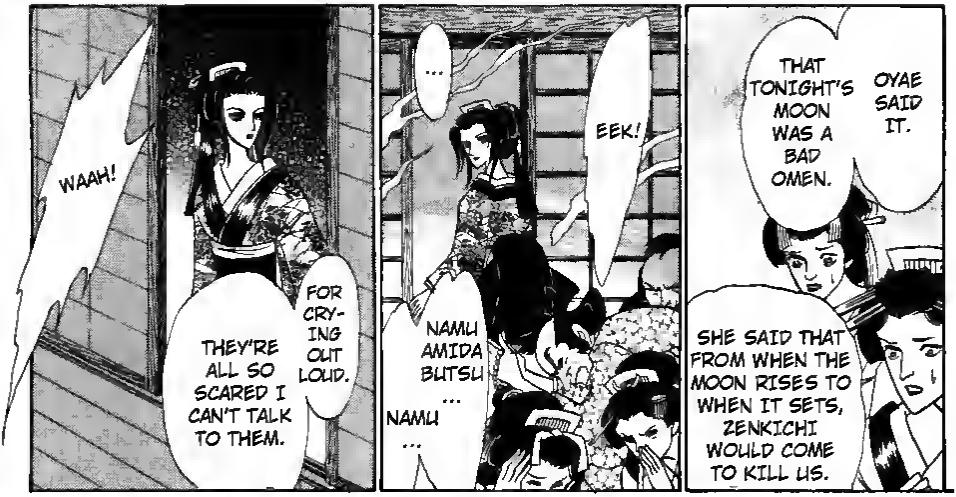
UH...?
MY DEMON EXPELLING CURSE DOESN'T WORK INSIDE.
DON'T BE STUPID.
UH... WHAT? THE DOOR JUST CLOSED ON ITS OWN.
D-DON'T JOKE AROUND. DO I SEEM LIKE THAT COWARDLY OF A MAN TO YOU?
EVEN IF YOU GET TOO SCARED TO MOVE, I WON'T REALLY CARE.
THERE'S NO TURNING BACK NOW.

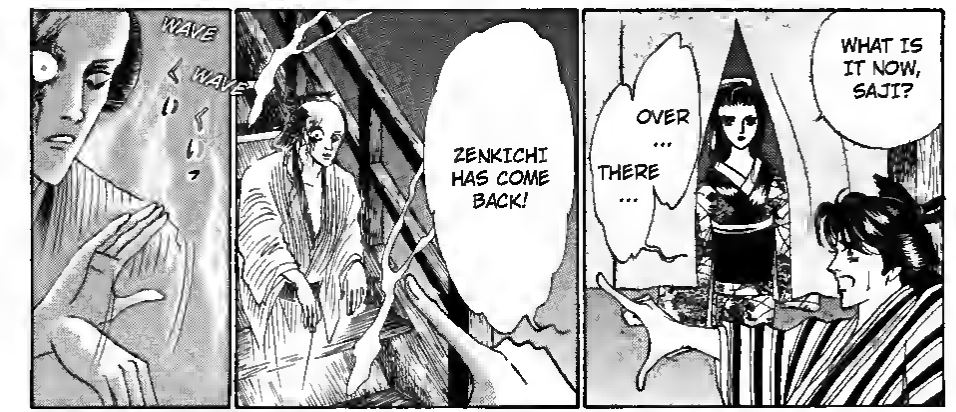
AAGH!
FWSH

* SANKRIT TERM MEANING "MINDFULNESS OF THE BUDDHA."
*NAMU AMIDA BUTSU ...
NAMU AMIDA BUTSU ...
SO HE REALLY IS
HAUNTING THIS BROTHEL ...
HE... HE WAS THERE ...
OYOU!
THERE'S NO MISTAKE, THAT WAS ZEN-KICHI.
EVEN THOUGH HE'S COMPLETELY CHANGED, THAT'S DEFINITELY THE DUMPLING MAKER ZENKICHI!
THAT'S THE VOICE OF A LIVING PERSON.
OYOU ...?
OYOU!
YOU PROMISED THAT THIS WOULD NOT HAPPEN.
I CAN'T GET UP!
YOU... YOU CAN'T LEAVE ME HERE!
PL-PLEASE WAIT, OYOU!
EEK!
I- I BEG YOU!
PLEASE LET ZENKICHI ASCEND!
NAMU AMIDA BUTSU ...
NAMU ...
NAMU AMIDA BUTSU ...

RATTLE
KYAA!
EEK!
ARE YOU THE OWNER HERE, TORAZOU?
HUH ...?
I AM OYOU THE URAME-SHIYA.
A MAN CALLING HIMSELF YOUR SUBORDINATE CAME TO ME EARLIER.
AND ... YOU ARE?
SO... DID YOU COME TO EXORCISE THE GHOST OF ZENKICHI?
I DON'T LIKE THE TERM EXORCISE.
I USE THE WORD "HELP" WHEN IT COMES TO SPIRITS.
MUTTER
SIR, I'VE HEARD OF HER.
OYOU THE URAME-SHIYA?
A PROFES-SIONAL URAME-SHIYA.
SHE HAS MORE SPIRITUAL POWER THAN MOST AND HANDLES GHOSTS AND MONSTERS...

IF YOU WANT MONEY, YOU CAN HAVE IT!
JUST DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT MONSTER!
IT'S BECAUSE IT'S THE 13TH NIGHT...
THE PALE SPIRITS HAVE COME INTO OUR BROTHEL...
WE CAN'T GET FIRE TO LIGHT ANY LAMPS.
WE CAN'T EVEN OPEN THE DOOR.
WH-WHAT-EVER!
JUST DO SOME-THING ABOUT THIS!
OYAE ?
THAT... THAT ZEN-KICHI ...
WAS A CUSTOMER OF OUR OYAE.
TELL ME THE DETAILS WITHOUT COWARDICE.
OR ELSE I WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND A WAY TO HELP.
HOW SHAMEFUL FOR SUCH A POWERFUL MAN.
IS OYAE INSIDE?
YEAH.
SHE'S LOCKED UP IN HER ROOM ON THE SECOND FLOOR
WHY HAS HE RETURNED LIKE THIS?
HE'S THE ONE WHO DIED, AND HE'S THE ONE WHO CAME BACK AS A GHOST!
THAT'S WHAT I'M ASKING YOU!
ONE OF OUR WHORES.
ZENKICHI WAS CRAZY ABOUT OYAE.


OYAE SAID IT.
THAT TONIGHT'S MOON WAS A BAD OMEN.
SHE SAID THAT FROM WHEN THE MOON RISES TO WHEN IT SETS, ZENKICHI WOULD COME TO KILL US.
EEK!
...
NAMU AMIDA BUTSU ...
NAMU ...
WAAH!
FOR CRY-ING OUT LOUD.
THEY'RE ALL SO SCARED I CAN'T TALK TO THEM.


WHAT IS IT NOW, SAJI?
OVER ... THERE ...
ZENKICHI HAS COME BACK!
WAVE
WAVE

HE'S WAVING ME OVER.
I GUESS HE'S TRYING TO TELL ME TO FOLLOW HIM.
W-WAIT...
OYOU!
ME ...
ME TOO ...
FOOSH

RATTLE
HE'S GONE.
I BELIEVE HE MEANT FOR US TO GO INTO THIS ROOM.
DAMN.
ANOTHER NUISANCE HAS ARRIVED.
IN ALL THE CONFUSION I GRABBED A KNIFE.
I THOUGHT I COULD FINALLY DIE THIS TIME.
OYAE,
YOU'RE OYAE, AREN'T YOU?
AND WHO ARE YOU?
OYOU THE URAMESHIYA FROM THE HAUNTED TENEMENT OF NAGASU.

IT SERVES THAT BASTARD TORAZOU RIGHT
THAT HE SHOULD BE SO SCARED OF ZENKICHI.
FIRST THE SPIRIT-BANISHING MONK AND THE SHAMAN, AND NOW THEY SEND AN URAMESHIYA.
GTCCLE
URAMESHIYA...?
EVEN YOU, SO HIGHLY SPOKEN OF,
YOU CANNOT STAND UP AGAINST THE DEPTHS OF ZENKICHI'S HATRED.
BUT THERE IS NO POINT.
JUST AS THE OTHERS WERE HELPLESS TO BANISH ZENKICHI, YOU WILL ALSO HAVE NO EFFECT.
DO YOU HAVE PROOF?
THE FACT THAT HE HAS RETURNED LIKE THIS IS ALL THE PROOF I NEED.
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
HATE ...?
BUT I KNOW IT.
THAT ZENKICHI WAS MURDERED BY TORAZOU.
YES, AND I AM CERTAIN THAT ZENKICHI HATES ME AS WELL.
IT'S BECAUSE HE ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIKES OF ME THAT HE SUFFERED THAT TERRIBLE DEATH.

WHEN I FIRST MET ZENKICHI
IT WAS THE NIGHT OF THE 15TH LAST MONTH.
THAT NIGHT,
MY USUAL PATRON FELL SUDDENLY ILL AND WAS UNABLE TO COME, SO MY HEART WAS UNEASY.
THAT NIGHT'S MOON WAS MOST BEAUTIFUL.
IF I DIDN'T HAVE A CUSTOMER THAT NIGHT, I WOULD BE IN TROUBLE WITH TORAZOU.
OH, SO YOU RUN A DUMPLING SHOP IN SUDA, ZENKICHI?
WELL, IT'S STILL JUST A STAND.
MY DREAM IS TO SOMEDAY HAVE A PROPER STORE-FRONT.
THEN, ZENKICHI CAME WITH THE MOON DUMPLINGS OUR BROTHEL HAD ORDERED.
WITHOUT THINKING OF THE CONSEQUENCES, I TOOK HIM INTO MY ROOM AS A CUSTOMER.
WH... WHAT?
SNIFF SNIFF
I SMELL SOY SAUCE ON YOU. IT SMELLS GOOD.
IT'S A NOSTALGIC SMELL.
OYAE?

OYAE, HAVE YOU BEEN HERE FOR 10 YEARS?
15?
THAT'S RIGHT.
I THINK I'VE HEARD THAT PROSTITUTES' CONTRACTS LAST 10 YEARS.
SO DOESN'T THAT MEAN THAT YOU'LL SOON BE FREE TO DO WHAT YOU WANT?
ARE YOU GOING TO HEAD HOME AND HELP OUT WITH THE DUMPLINGS AGAIN -
HA.
YOU KNOW, BEFORE I CAME HERE, I WORKED AT MY FAMILY'S TEA HOUSE.
BEFORE I WAS SOLD IN EDO AT 15, I USED TO HELP MY FATHER BAKE THE DUMPLINGS.
THOUGH I DON'T KNOW IF THEY WERE SPARED BY THE EPIDEMIC 10 YEARS AGO AND ARE STILL MAKING DUMPLINGS NOW.
...
SAD TO SAY, BUT I NO LONGER HAVE FAMILY BACK HOME.
MY ENTIRE FAMILY DIED DUE TO AN EPIDEMIC.
IT'S IRONIC THAT I SURVIVED AS I WAS SOLD TO SAVE MY FAMILY FROM THE EPIDEMIC.
IT'S COMPLETELY IDIOTIC.
ZEN-KICHI ?

IN THE LIGHT OF THE MOON ON THE 15TH
ZENKICHI AND I FELL IN LOVE AND BECAME A COUPLE.
O... OYAE... I'M SO SORRY...
OH NO, WHY ARE YOU CRYING?
ZEN-KICHI.
YOU'RE A GOOD PERSON.
I... I KNOW JUST HOW PAINFUL THIS MUST BE FOR YOU, OYAE.
I HAVE ALSO LOST MY FAMILY BEFORE THEIR TIME...
HIC
MY CONTRACT WOULD END ON SEPTEMBER 13TH.
AND WE WHO BOTH BORE THE BURDEN OF HAVING LOST OUR FAMILIES WOULD OPEN A DUMPLING SHOP.
AFTER THAT, HE CAME TO ME ALMOST EVERY NIGHT.
HE WAS EVEN SAYING THAT HE WOULD MAKE ME HIS WIFE.
I HAD BEEN HEARING STORIES FROM THOSE WHO RETIRED ABOUT PAYING THEIR WAY OUT OF THE CONTRACT.
I WAS TOLD TO PAY MY WAY OUT BEFORE MY CONTRACT WAS OVER.
BUT THE ONE WHO GOT IN THE WAY OF THAT WAS THE OWNER, TORAZOU.
MY CONTRACT SHOULD BE OVER.
YES, THIS VERY DAY.
THE 13TH ...?

DESPITE ALL YOU HAD SUFFERED, YOU STILL NEEDED MONEY TO BE FREE
THAT'S RIGHT.
THAT DISHONEST MAN SQUEEZES AS MUCH AS HE CAN OUT OF US GIRLS.
OF COURSE I THOUGHT THERE WAS NO WAY HE COULD TURN ME DOWN.
BUT, THAT BASTARD SAID...
YOU'LL GO AWAY ZENKICHI ONCE YOUR CONTRACT IS UP?
HA, DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH.
YOU STILL HAVE 5 MORE YEARS UNTIL YOU'RE FREE.
BUT ...
I WAS SUPPOSED TO SERVE FOR 10 YEARS, AND THOSE 10 YEARS SHOULD BE UP TODAY!
HMPH.
THERE'S THIS THING CALLED INTEREST ON A LOAN.
PLUS THE FEES FOR YOUR BEAUTIFUL DRESSES AND FOR ROOM AND BOARD HAVE BEEN PILING UP.
SEE, IT'S ALL HERE IN YOUR CONTRACT.
IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT,
YOU CAN PAY YOUR WAY OUT.
THEN YOU CAN BE FREE RIGHT AWAY.
... EVEN THEN.
DESPITE HOW DISAPPOINTED I WAS, ZENKICHI KEPT TELLING ME THAT HE'D WAIT.
EVEN IF IT TOOK DECADES ...
ON THE 13TH, WHEN WE SHOULD HAVE MARRIED,
WE WOULD SECRETLY EXCHANGE OUR VOWS.

WHEN I WAS TOLD HE DIED
YOU KNOW, I THOUGHT I SHOULD HURRY AND JOIN HIM
BUT I JUST COULDN'T SEEM TO DIE
ONCE I DECIDED I WOULD DIE, A SHRIEK RANG OUT THROUGH THE BROTHEL
BUT HE DIED BEFORE THAT PROMISED DAY
TORAZOU MUST HAVE BEEN ANGRY THAT I DIDN'T DO AS TOLD
SO, I KNEW IT WAS TORAZOU WHO KILLED HIM
HE IS THE KIND OF MAN WHO WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR MONEY
AND SOMEONE WHO WAS TOO SCARED TO MOVE SAID THIS
"ZENKICHI'S GHOST HAS APPEARED," SHE SAID
SOON THE BUILDING WAS IN AN UPROAR
RUMORS TRAVEL FAST...
AND SOON EVERYONE WAS SAYING THAT ZENKICHI'S GHOST HAD APPEARED
DID YOU SEE HIM, OYAE?
ZENKICHI'S GHOST?
HE'S ANGRY...
HE HATES ME WANTING ME TO HURRY UP AND DIE BECAUSE IT'S MY FAULT HE WAS KILLED
THAT'S WHY
EVEN THOUGH I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO SEE HIM AGAIN, EVEN AS A GHOST, HE WILL SHOW HIMSELF TO ANYONE BUT ME.

IF YOU WANT TO SEE ME, THEN JOIN ME IN DEATH.
I'M SURE THAT IS WHAT HE WANTS TO SAY TO ME.
YES, I KNOW THAT TONIGHT IS THE NIGHT OF THE 13TH.
WITH THE POWER OF THE FULL MOON'S CURSE,
HE CAN FINALLY KILL THAT TORAZOU TONIGHT.
AND THEN HE WILL BRING ME BACK WITH HIM.
O...
OYOU.
WHAT IS THAT?
WAVER
ゆらぐ
OH NO!
THE WOMEN ARE STARTING TO BE CORPOREAL!

I DON'T WANT THIS...
I WANT MY MOTHER...
I DON'T WANT TO DIE...
I DON'T WANT TO DIE HERE ...
THE HUNGER PAINS ...
IT HURTS ...
PLEASE DON'T HIT ME ...
SLAP
GRAB
WHAT ...
I'M GOING TO DIE ...
I AM GOING TO DIE SOON ...
HUSH! ...
COME AND TAKE ME AWAY
ZEN-KICHI ...
SMACK

OYOU ...
I'M JUST HAVING HER TAKE A REST.
WE CAN'T LET THESE WOMEN GATHER ANY MORE STRENGTH.
WO-MEN?
YES.
THESE SPIRITS FLOATING HERE ARE MOST CERTAINLY THAT OF THE MANY WOMEN WHO DIED UNABLE TO ESCAPE THIS PLACE.

THEY PROJECTED STRONG FEELINGS OF WANTING TO DIE ONTO OYAE.
THEIR POWER GREW AND GREW.
ZENKICHI'S SPIRIT ISN'T THE ONE CAUSING THESE STRANGE HAPPENINGS.
IT'S THESE WOMEN.

HUH ...?
I FEEL NO HATRED OR ILL WILL FROM THE SPIRIT OF ZENKICHI.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, ZENKICHI?
... YES, THIS IS CORRECT.
...

BUT YOU ARE THE ONE WHO CALLED THESE SPIRITS OUT.
THEY SAY SPIRITS BEGET SPIRITS.
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN HANGING AROUND HERE THAT THIS HAS HAPPENED.
OYOU ...
WHAT IS IT?
YOU CAN HEAR MY VOICE ...?
THE MONKS AND SHAMANS THAT TORAZOU CALLED UP UNTIL NOW WERE USELESS.
I WANTED NOTHING MORE THAN TO LET OYAE KNOW THAT SHE SHOULD LIVE, NOT DIE.
BUT ALL THEY DID WAS REPEAT STRANGE CHANTS, NEVER LISTENING TO ME AT ALL.
OH...
HOW ELSE WOULD WE BE TALKING?
YOU... YOU ARE AS GOOD AS THEY SAY YOU ARE!
PLEASE, CARRY ON.
HE'S JUST A BIT EMBARRASSED ABOUT HIS SPIRITUAL POWERS.
OH, EVEN SAJI CAN HEAR ME?
THAT'S NOT WHAT SHE THINKS.
TELL OYAE NOT TO DIE?
H-HEY.
HOLD ON.

YES...
I WAS JUST SO CONCERNED ABOUT OYAE...
I JUST WANTED HER TO STOP THINKING ONLY ABOUT DYING.
AND THAT WAS WHEN YOU SURPRISED EVERYONE, INTERFERRING WITH OYAE'S SUICIDE.
YES ... BUT UNFORT-UNATELY ... THE STORY BECAME BLOWN OUT OF PROPORTION ...
BEFORE I REALIZED IT, I HAD BEEN PAINTED AS AN EVIL GHOST.
AND FOR SOME REASON OTHER GHOSTS KEPT COMING OUT TOO...
THEY KEPT GETTING MORE AND MORE SCARED OF ME...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
ARE YOU STUPID OR WHAT?
WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO TELL OYAE DIRECTLY TO NOT DIE?
BUT ... I DON'T KNOW IF OYAE CAN HEAR ME OR NOT...
SHE CAN HEAR YOU.
THE BOND BETWEEN YOUR HEARTS IS TRUE. I'M SURE SHE CAN HEAR YOU.

B-BUT...
MY FACE IS COMPLE-TELY DIFFE-RENT ...
MY ...
I DON'T WANT TO BE SEEN BY OYAE...
IF SHE SEES ME,
I DON'T KNOW HOW SCARED SHE'LL BE...
WHEN I THINK OF THAT...
I JUST CAN'T BEAR TO DO IT...
EVEN NOW, I'M AFRAID...
THAT OYAE MAY COME TO HATE AND FEAR ME...
WH... WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU'RE A MAN, YOU DON'T HAVE TO CARE WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE.
TH-THAT'S ...
TWITCH
BUT...
EVEN YOU WERE TOO FRIGHTENED TO MOVE WHEN YOU FIRST SAW ME.
SORRY ABOUT THAT.
YOU JUST SURPRISED ME.
ANYWAY, WHY DON'T YOU JUST TRY GOING TO SEE HER?
THEN YOU CAN PUT AN END TO THIS WHOLE MESS RIGHT AWAY.

COME ON, ZEN-KICHI ...
I JUST ... CAN'T.
I... STILL DON'T HAVE THE... COUR-AGE...
FOOSH
ZEN-KICHI!
SHIT.
YOU CAN'T HELP HIM
LET'S TALK TO OYOU INSTEAD.
HE'S A GHOST YET HE STILL HAS NO SELF-RESPECT.
I DOUBT THAT SHE WILL BELIEVE US SO EASILY, THOUGH...

THIS IS NOT GOOD.
THEY HAVE GAINED POWER
FASTER THAN I EXPECTED.
I'LL... KILL YOU.
NO!
THE WOMEN ARE POSSESSING OYAE!
WOAH,
W-WHAT?
KILL
I'LL KILL YOU...
KILL
YOU WHORES...
...
I'LL KILL YOU.
ALL OF YOU...

RAGE
I'LL KILL YOU!
SWSH
WAH!
TA-
GWAA
STOP!

PLEASE HELP ME, OYOU!
OYOU!
WAH!
AAGH!
THEY ARE ...
UGH.
SO STRONG ...
ZEN-KICHI!
YOU'RE HERE, RIGHT?
I KNOW YOU'RE HERE!
PLEASE STOP OYAE, QUICKLY!
STOP HER!
IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING, SOMETHING TERRIBLE WILL HAPPEN!

HURRY ...
...
THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN STOP HER NOW IS YOU!
HURRY!
KILL
WHERE ARE THE WHORES?
WHERE ARE THEY ...
KILL
STOP, OYAE!
I'LL KILL THEM.
I'LL KILL THEM ALL!

KILL
...
KILL
KILL
UGH
...
...
ZEN KICHI ...?
I'LL KILL THEM!
... KILL.

JUMP
STOP THIS,
OYAE!

...ZEN-KICHI?
MUTTER
MUTTER
OH...
YOU POOR THING...
THAT LOOKS PAIN-FUL.
I'M SURE IT MUST HAVE HURT WHEN YOU DIED...
OH...
OYAE...
YOU'VE FINALLY...
SHOWN YOURSELF TO ME...

HUH ...?
NO! YOU CAN'T!
YOU CAN'T DIE, OYAE!
JUST WAIT.
I'LL... DIE. I'LL DIE SOON.
IF YOU END YOUR LIFE, YOU'LL SUFFER HEAVEN'S WRATH.
AND THEN THE TWO OF US WILL NEVER MEET AGAIN.
YOU'LL FALL INTO AN UNENDING HELL.
I KNOW THIS BECAUSE I AM ALREADY DEAD.
OYAE, YOU NEED TO LIVE.
LIVE A LONG LIFE IN MY PLACE.
AND THEN WE CAN MEET...
WE'LL MEET AGAIN IN THE NEXT WORLD.
ZEN-KICHI...

ZEN-KICHI ...?
KILL?
I WAS KILLED BY TORAZOU ...?
I CAN'T FORGIVE TORAZOU FOR KILLING YOU, NO MATTER WHAT...
BUT ...
BUT I CAN'T FORGIVE HIM...
ZENKICHI, YOU SHOULD TELL HER WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED.
IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'RE MISTAKEN AGAIN, OYAE.
I WAS WALKING ALONG THE RIVER BANK,
THINKING ABOUT HOW I WANTED TO SEE YOU.
OYAE, THAT NIGHT 10 DAYS AGO,
IT ROLLED DOWN TO THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL.
THEN, I GUESS I WASN'T TAKING CARE,
AND DROPPED MY PACK.
OYOU.
THANKS TO YOU, WE'RE SAFE.
SO DID THEIR POWER.
AS I EXPECTED, AS YOUR WILL TO DIE WEAKENED,

CRASH
RUMBLE
WAAA!
RUMBLE
SPLASH
LUCKILY,
IT DIDN'T FALL INTO THE RIVER, BUT STOPPED PARTWAY DOWN.
I REACHED OUT TO GRAB IT, AND...
THE ROCKS CRUMBLED ...
SO YOU MEAN TO SAY IT WAS JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE A KLUTZ?
...
YES, IT WAS UNDIGNI-FIED...
BUT WHAT WAS IN THAT PACKAGE YOU DROPPED, ANYWAY?
IT MUST HAVE BEEN REALLY IMPORTANT.
INSIDE WERE DUMPLINGS COOKED IN SOY SAUCE.
YES, DUMPLINGS I WORKED VERY HARD TO MAKE.
DUMP-LINGS?

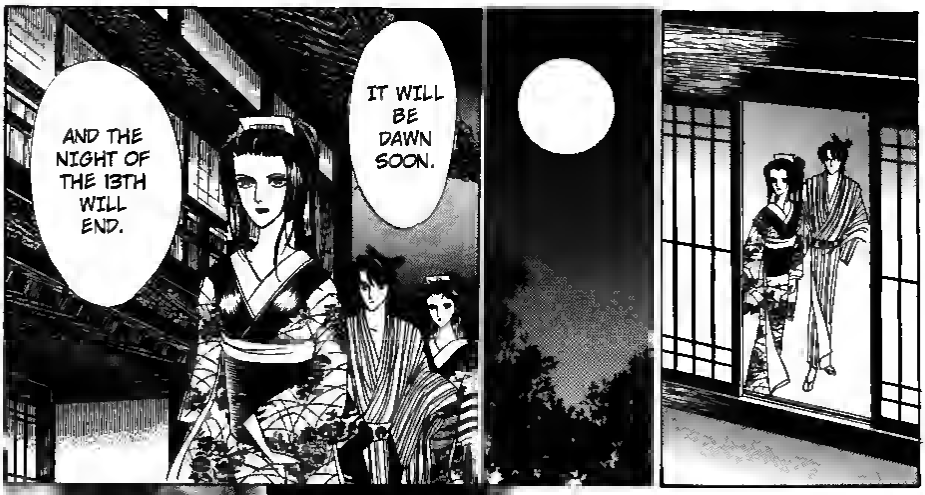
ZEN-KICHI ...
I WANTED OYAE TO TRY THEM.
I WAS GOING TO TELL HER THAT WE WOULD MAKE THESE TOGETHER SOME DAY.
THIS TIME, I HAVE TO GO...
VERY, VERY FAR AWAY...
IT'S ... GOING TO BE OKAY, OYAE.
I HAVE TO GO NOW...
HUH ...?
HOW ABOUT YOU HELP US WITH ONE MORE PROBLEM?
BEFORE THAT,
WAIT
ZEN-KICHI!

OYOU!
DID YOU EXORCISE THE SPIRIT OF ZEN-KICHI?
DID YOU DO IT?
RATTLE
NAMU AMIDA BUTSU ...
NAMU AMIDA BUTSU ...
CREEP
LOOK, HERE HE IS BEFORE YOUR EYES...
UNFORTU-NATELY, I CAN'T HELP YOU WITH THAT.
HUH?
HE WANTS NOTHING MORE THAN TO KILL YOU AND WON'T LISTEN TO A WORD I SAY.
WHAT !?

TORAZOU, GET THE CONTRACT!
IF YOU RIP UP OYAE'S CONTRACT, THEN THE SPIRIT OF ZENKICHI WILL BE SATISFIED!
EEK!
WAAH!
P... PLEASE, I BEG YOU...
HELP ME!
CON-
CON-TRACT ?
HURRY AND DO IT!
THERE'S NO OTHER WAY YOU CAN BE SAVED!
AAH!
IT'S ... RIGHT HERE ...
THIS ... IS OYAE'S ...
RIP
RIP
RIP
ARE YOU HAPPY NOW?
YOU'RE DEAD, NOW GO AWAY!
NO, NOT YET...

NOD
NOD
NOW THE SPIRIT IS SAYING YOU MUST DESTROY THE CONTRACTS OF THE OTHER GIRLS AS WELL.
THAT'S SO CRUEL ...
IF YOU DON'T, THE SPIRIT WILL KILL YOU...
BOOO-
WAH!
THE SPIRIT OF ZENKICHI IS NOW SATISFIED AND HAS LEFT.
AREN'T YOU HAPPY, TORA-ZOU?
FOOSH
RIP
RIP
RIP
RIP
AH!
WHAT ARE YOU -

UGH ...
FINE, DO WHATEVER THE HELL YOU WANT!


IT WILL BE DAWN SOON.
AND THE NIGHT OF THE 13TH WILL END.

CAN YOU SEE IT, OYAE?
ZENKICHI IS GOING TO HEAVEN
HE'S BRINGING WITH HIM ALL THE POOR SPIRITS OF THE PROSTITUTES WHO HAD BEEN SEALED IN THIS BROTHEL WITH HATRED AND SORROW

YES, OYOU.
I SEE IT.
I CAN SEE IT...
YOUR HUSBAND WAS QUITE A KIND MAN.
YOU SHOULD LIVE IN HONOR OF THAT.
YOU SHOULD LIVE LIFE FULLY.
IF YOU DO,
I'M SURE THAT SOME DAY
YOU WILL MEET HIM AGAIN.
...

OYOU, DID YOU HEAR?
AFTER THAT, THE BROTHEL CLOSED DOWN
WHAT WITH ALL THE UPROAR OVER THE GHOSTS, AND THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL THE CONTRACTS, THERE WAS NOTHING TORAZOU COULD DO.
OH?
RETURNING FROM THE SPRINGS
ZENKICHI DUMPLINGS
HOW ABOUT A TASTY ZENKICHI DUMPLING?
WHAT'S WRONG, I THOUGHT YOU WOULD BE HAPPIER TO HEAR THAT.
IT'S ONLY A DROP IN THE BUCKET.
EVEN IF WE END ONE BROTHEL IN ONE TOWN, THE NUMBER OF PROSTITUTES IN THE WORLD IS STILL ON PAR WITH THE NUMBER OF STARS IN THE SKY.
OYOU,
THAT'S ...
LOOK THERE!
IT'S ZENKICHI'S FAMOUS DUMPLINGS!
BUT THERE'S NOTHING THAT WE CAN DO ABOUT THAT.
THAT MAY BE SO.
WOULD YOU LIKE A DUMPLING?

THESE DUMPLINGS ARE SO GOOD.
I CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF THE SOY SAUCE ONES!
I'LL TAKE TEN, PLEASE.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
OYAE SEEMS TO BE DOING WELL.
WHEN YOU TAKE OYAE, WHO'S TRYING SO HARD, INTO CONSIDERATION...
COULD IT BE OKAY TO HONESTLY BE HAPPY WITH THE WAY THINGS TURNED OUT?
YES, IT IS.
SINCE NEXT YEAR WHEN IT COMES TIME TO WATCH THE MOON, AT LEAST I WON'T HAVE TO SUFFER THROUGH ANY MORE GROSS DUMPLINGS...
OYOU!

VOL. VIII THE OMEN - END

うらめしや Vol. IX
URAMESHIYA
THE WHIRLWIND
かまいたち

OYOU.
IORI...
BEAUTIFULLY CRUEL LOVE
FROM LONG AGO...
A TRACE OF
THAT WAS

COUGH COUGH COUGH
IN EDO, THE COMMON COLD WAS RUNNING RAMPANT.
HYUUUUU
THIS YEAR'S WINTER WAS UNUSUALLY COLD, AND DRY WINDS BLEW STRONGLY.
ふらあ DIZZY
COMING RIGHT UP...
HEY!
GET A HOLD OF YOURSELF!
...
OH YES, I'M FINE...
ARE YOU OKAY?
HEY, DID YOU CATCH A COLD AS WELL?
26 SOBA
YOU WANT SOME MORE SOBA?
I CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM.
NEAR BENTEN BRIDGE CAUGHT A HORRIBLE COLD.
THAT OLD MAN WHO RUNS THE NIHACHI SOBA STAND WHICH I PASS BY ON MY WAY BACK FROM THE HOT SPRINGS
YEAH, YOU HEARD, RIGHT?
YOU'LL BE WORKING AT THE SOBA SHOP AFTER TONIGHT?

THE COLD THIS YEAR IS TRULY AWFUL.
ABOUT HALF OF THE RESIDENTS IN THIS TENEMENT HAVE CAUGHT IT, TOO.
I COULDN'T JUST STAND BY, SO I OFFERED TO TAKE HIS PLACE.
IF HE CAN'T WORK, THEN THE WHOLE FAMILY WILL STARVE TO DEATH.
AFTER ALL, HE DOES HAVE 10 CHILDREN.
I JUST DON'T HAVE AN APPETITE FOR SOME REASON.
AND MY HEAD FEELS HEAVY,
MY STOMACH HURTS...
HUH?
WHAT'S WRONG, OYOU?
YOU HAVEN'T EATEN AT ALL.
IS IT NO GOOD? IT'S STIR FRY AND ONION SOUP...
... NO.
OYOU,
YOU'VE GOT A TERRIBLE FEVER!
I GUESS I DO...
STUPID!
YOU'VE CAUGHT A COLD, TOO.

LOOKS LIKE YOUR HAUNTED AND CURSED BOWL, KIMONO OF EVIL, AND THIS STRANGE BOX CAME FALLING OUT.
RATTLE
RATTLE
GRIP
I'LL PUT DOWN A FUTON SO YOU CAN GET SOME REST.
I KNOCKED SOME THINGS OUT OF THE CLOSET.
OOPS, THIS ISN'T GOOD.
HEAVEN PROTECT US.
HUH ...?
DON'T TOUCH THAT BOX!
GRAB

WHY NOT, OYOU?
...
WH-WHAT'S THE MATTER?
NO-THING.
SORRY FOR YELLING AT YOU.
OYOU ...?
THE FEVER HAS ME ALL WORKED UP.
NO-THING AT ALL.
...
NO.
WHAT'S IN THE BOX IS...
MEMORIES OF MY PAST, LONG SINCE GONE.
...
IS THERE REALLY SOMETHING THAT TERRIBLE INSIDE OF THE BOX?
DON'T ASK SUCH RUDE QUESTIONS.
EVERYBODY HAS THINGS IN THEIR PAST THAT THEY DON'T WANT ANYONE ELSE TO KNOW ABOUT, DON'T THEY?
MEMO-RIES?

PLEASE PUT THIS AS FAR BACK INTO THE CLOSET AS YOU CAN.
... OKAY.
WHY ARE YOU JUST STAND-ING THERE?
HURRY AND SPREAD OUT THE FUTON.
FOR SOME REASON I DON'T WANT TO BE AWAKE RIGHT NOW ...
...
OYOU'S PAST WHICH SHE DOESN'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW ABOUT...
C- COLD.
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER
OYOU?
OYOU, I MADE EGG-NOG.
WANT SOME?

THIS IS NOT GOOD.
HER FEVER JUST KEEPS GETTING HIGHER AND HIGHER.
I NEED TO PICK UP SOMETHING THAT WILL LOWER HER FEVER.
BUT AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT, I DOUBT ANYWHERE IS OPEN.
HEY, TOUKA!
OYOU'S IN TROUBLE!
GET OUT HERE!
SILENCE
... PPT.
HE'S ALWAYS AROUND TO GET IN THE WAY WHEN WE DON'T NEED HIM, BUT WHEN WE DO, HE'S TOTALLY USELESS.
THAT DAMN FOX BASTARD ...
GASP
GASP
GASP
RATTLE
TOUKA, ARE YOU HERE?
YOU CAUGHT ONE TOO ...?

...
HOLD ON, OYOU.
I'LL BUY YOU SOME MEDICINE FOR YOUR FEVER IN THE MORNING.
SO I'M THE ONLY HEALTHY ONE?
SPLASH
IT'S LIKE BEING SURROUNDED BY THE DEAD.
HUH?
...I... ORI...
WHAT IS IT?
HM?
YOU WANT TO SAY SOME-THING?
I... ORI...
IORI...

I DON'T KNOW.
WHO IS THIS IORI?
IORI?
WHO IS THIS IORI GUY TO HER?
SHE'S SAYING HIS NAME IN HER DELIRIOUS STATE...
CLACK
CLACK
CLACK
CLACK
CLACK
CLACK
CLACK

I WANT TO SEE WHAT IS INSIDE THIS BOX...
HUH?
WAS THAT A RAT?
EVERYONE HAS SOMETHING IN THEIR PAST THEY DON'T WANT OTHERS TO KNOW ABOUT...
THERE JUST MIGHT BE A CLUE AS TO WHO THIS IORI GUY IS, HIDDEN INSIDE.
RIP
OOPS ...
I TORE IT!
NOT GOOD!
SHIT, IT'S COVERED IN SEALS.
IT WON'T BE EASY TO PEEL THESE OFF WITHOUT OYOU KNOWING.
THUMP
UGH ...

SOBA?
YOU WERE GOING TO HELP AT THE SOBA SHOP?
RATTLE
RATTLE
SLAM
AH!
SHIT, I FORGOT!
SAJI ...?
O-OYOU! YOU'RE AWAKE!
I'M FINE, SO GO ON AHEAD TO THE SOBA SHOP.
DON'T BE ABSURD.
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN LEAVE YOU ALONE.
WHEN IT COMES TO COLDS, THE ONLY WAY TO GET BETTER IS TO SLEEP.
IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE HERE OR NOT.
BUT ...
JUST GO ALREADY.
I HATE MEN WHO BREAK PROMISES.
...

GASP
GET ME... SOME... FRIED TOFU... SUSHI...
GASP
SA-
SAJI ...
GOBLE
WELL, OKAY THEN.
THE FEVER MEDICINE I BOUGHT EARLIER IS OVER THERE.
I'LL BRING SOME NOURISHING FOOD ON THE WAY BACK.
BE A GOOD BOY AND GO TO SLEEP.
YOU DAMN USELESS FOX!

ACHOO
OOH, THAT'S COLD.
OBA
WITH THE COLD EPIDEMIC, THE STREETS OF EDO ARE UNUSUALLY EMPTY.
THANKS TO THAT, I DON'T HAVE ANY CUSTOMERS ...

HYUUU
HM?
WHAT? THERE WAS AN ODDLY WARM BREEZE JUST NOW ...

EE...
EEK!
A... GHOST!
THE GHOST OF A WOMAN.
SHE'S... GETTING CLOSER!
I KNOW YOU...
WHY DO YOU... KNOW MY NAME?
YOU ARE THE ONE I AM INDEBTED TO FOR BREAKING THE SEAL ON THE BOX I WAS LOCKED AWAY IN...
SAJI.
PLEASE DON'T BE SO AFRAID OF ME.

HEY, DO YOU KNOW IORI?
IORI ...
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO WAS SEALED INSIDE THAT BOX?
SO IT WASN'T THAT IORI GUY?
WHO IS HE TO OYOU?
THAT NAME BRINGS BACK MEMORIES.
PLEASE, TELL ME.
YOU'RE A CUTE LITTLE BOY.
BUT IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN YOU WOULD ACTUALLY BE HAPPIER NOT KNOWING.
AS HE IS HER LOVER FROM LONG AGO...
YOU'VE REALLY FALLEN FOR OYOU, I CAN SEE IT.
GIGGLE
HER LOVER FROM LONG AGO...?

PLEASE BREAK THOSE SEALS.
I CAN'T HELP IT...
NOW IT'LL JUST BOTHER ME.
EVEN SO, I WANT TO KNOW.
VERY WELL.
IF YOU WOULD GO SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT, I WILL TELL YOU.
IF YOU DO, THEN I WILL TELL YOU.
ABOUT IORI AND OYOU FROM THE PAST.
HUH ...?
BUT I CAN'T RIGHT NOW.
THERE ARE STILL THREE SEALS ON THE BOX.
HEY, WAIT!
WHO ARE...
MY NAME IS OTSUYA.
I AM CALLED OTSUYA ...
...

RATTLE
THUNK
DIZZY
DIZZY
HA HEE ...
I CAN'T THINK.
NO GOOD.
DROOP
HUH?
I ALMOST FEEL LIKE I CAN SEE SOME SINISTER SHADOWS AROUND SAJI...
HEY, FOX GUY. I BROUGHT YOUR FRIED TOFU SUSHI.
GO AHEAD AND EAT IT.
SIGH
OYOU, I'M BACK.
YOU NEED MORE SLEEP.
YOU STILL HAVE A HIGH FEVER.
...

RIIP
...
IT WAS VERY GOOD!
THANK YOU!
SOBA
IT'S MIDNIGHT.
IT'S ABOUT THE TIME THAT GHOST OF OTSUYA SHOULD APPEAR.
SHE'S HERE.

SHE HAS CLEARLY BECOME MORE DISTICT IN FORM SINCE LAST NIGHT.
YOU'RE QUITE STINGY, AREN'T YOU?
WHY DIDN'T YOU REMOVE ALL OF THE SEALS?
TELL ME ABOUT OYOU'S PAST, LIKE YOU PROMISED.
ONLY THEN WILL I REMOVE THE SEALS.
UNDER-STOOD.
VERY WELL.
I WILL TELL YOU.
BACK THEN, SHE WAS NOT YET CALLED OYOU.
AND I WAS STILL A LIVING HUMAN BEING.
I FIRST MET OYOU EIGHT YEARS AGO.
THROUGH AN EMPLOYMENT AGENCY, I WAS WORKING AT A TEA HOUSE WHERE OYOU WAS A SERVING GIRL.
SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL, BUT ANTISOCIAL.

BUT I COULD SEE IT WITH JUST ONE GLANCE...
THAT WE WERE THE SAME...
THAT SHE HELD THE SAME POWERS AS I.
HUH?
SO, YOU HAVE SPIRITUAL POWERS LIKE OYOU?
IT'S NOT QUITE THE SAME AS SPIRITUAL POWERS.
WE CAN USE THE POWER OF THE WHIRLWIND.
WHIRL-WIND?
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
I HAD POSSESSED A MYSTERIOUS POWER EVER SINCE I WAS A CHILD.
POWERS TO USE THE WIND AS A SWORD...
I HAD COMPLETE CONTROL OVER MY POWERS TO REND MY HATED ENEMIES ASUNDER.
...

YES.
OYOU AND I HAD SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES, AS WE BOTH BORE THE BURDEN OF A STRANGE POWER THAT OTHERS FEARED AND HATED.
WE BECAME AS CLOSE AS SISTERS VERY QUICKLY.
BACK THEN, I WAS SO HAPPY THAT I MET OYOU.
OYOU WAS, AS IF SHE WERE MY SISTER, SO VERY DEAR TO ME.
WE RENTED A TENEMENT ROOM TOGETHER AND SHARED IT HAPPILY.
UNTIL, OF COURSE, THAT MAN...
UNTIL IORI APPEARED BEFORE US.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
IT'S FINE, RIGHT? JUST COME WITH US!
PLEASE STOP!
A SERVING GIRL WOULD TURN DOWN SAMURAI?
CRASH
OYOU!

WE WILL NO LONGER BE ABLE TO STAY HERE.
YOU CAN'T USE THE WHIRLWIND IN FRONT OF OTHERS.
DON'T, OTSUYA.
REACH
GRAB
OYOU!
ST-
SO...
THIS YOUNG LADY DOES NOT WANT YOUR ATTENTION
WHO... WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
THEN YOU SHOULD FEEL EVEN MORE ASHAMED OF YOUR ACTIONS
WE WORK FOR THE SHOGUN!
SH-SHUT UP, YOU RONIN*!

* A SAMURAI WITHOUT A MASTER.

CHING
HOW DARE YOU SAY SUCH A THING...
SLAP
WOOSH
ARGH!
CHOP

NO NEED FOR THANKS.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, SIR.
WE'LL... REMEMBER THIS.
COUGH
ゴホッ
COUGH
ゴホッ
UGH...
I DON'T CARE.
SIR!
DON'T TOUCH ME.
I HAVE TUBERCULOSIS.
YOU COULD CATCH IT...

IORI WAS A RONIN WITH NO RELATIVES, AND ILL AS WELL.
AFTER THAT, OYOU WOULD FREQUENTLY VISIT HIM AT HIS HOME.
THAT WAS WHEN OYOU AND IORI SAIKI MET.
HEY?!
...
WAVER
AND... AND THEN?
GULP
ゴクッ
THEN I WILL TELL YOU EVERYT-HING.
ピクッ
ピピピピ
HEY!
COME BACK AFTER REMOVING THE SEALS.
IF YOU WANT TO HEAR MORE,
THAT'S ALL FOR TONIGHT.

OYOU.
AREN'T YOU AFRAID?
OF WHAT?
MY ILL-NESS.
EVERYONE FEARS INFECTION, AND THEY WON'T COME NEAR THE WRETCHED ME...
I CAN SEE THEM.
THE DEMONS OF ILLNSS WHICH SURROUND IORI...
I WILL BE FINE.
LEAVE.
DO NOT TOUCH IORI.
LEAVE.
OYOU?
YOU WILL NOT INFECT ME.

OYOU, WHAT WAS THAT JUST NOW?
...
WOOOOSH
IT SEEMS YOU CAN SEE THEM TOO, IORI.
OCCASIONALLY IF A NORMAL PERSON COMES NEAR SOMEONE OF GREAT SPIRITUAL STRENGTH, THEY GAIN THE ABILITY TO SEE SPIRITS.
SPIRITUAL POWER...?
THOSE ARE THE DEMONS YOUR EVIL SPIRIT OF ILLNESS SUMMONED.
I DO NOT HAVE THE POWER TO BANISH THE ORIGINAL EVIL SPIRIT OF ILLNESS, BUT...
I CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE WEAKER DEMONS...
OYOU ...?
YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE I WANTED NOT TO KNOW...
I'M SURE YOU NOW THINK OF ME AS A DISTURBING WOMAN.

I WON'T COME HERE ANY MORE.
OYOU!
WAIT, OYOU!
GRAB
IORI?
DON'T GO, OYOU.
I LOVE YOU
I HAVE EVER SINCE WE FIRST MET.
NO MATTER WHAT YOU ARE...
IORI...

I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I HAVE TO LIVE.
I HOPE YOU CAN FORGIVE MY SELFISHNESS, BECAUSE DESPITE THAT I WANT TO KEEP YOU WITH ME.
I HOPE YOU WILL ACCEPT MY SELFISHNESS THAT I HAVE TO HOLD YOU CLOSE TO ME LIKE THIS...
I...
LOVE YOU TOO.
IORI...

IORI...
...
EVEN I CAN REALIZE
THAT THERE IS SOMETHING DANGEROUS ABOUT THAT SPIRIT OF OTSUYA...
MAYBE THIS IS SOMETHING ACTUALLY BETTER OFF SEALED AWAY...
BUT...
I...
RIP

AGAIN SHE'S MORE SOLID THAN SHE WAS BEFORE...
HOW MUCH DID I TELL YOU LAST NIGHT...?
エンマ
I'M SORRY, OTSUYA.
WE'VE DONE SO WELL HERE UNTIL NOW...
BUT OYOU, THAT MAN IS...
WHAT DID YOU SAY, OYOU?
YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE HERE AND LIVE WITH IORI?
TWO YEARS AGO IORI'S ONLY LITTLE SISTER WAS RAPED AND MURDERED BY SOMEONE.
HE CONTINUES TO PUSH HIS ILL BODY IN ORDER TO PURSUE THAT HATED FOE.
I KNOW HE DOESN'T HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT.
I WANT TO HELP HIM, EVEN JUST A LITTLE.
BUT THAT IS EXACTLY WHY I WANT TO MAKE HIS WISH COME TRUE.
HE WANTS TO CONQUER HIS ENEMY.
IORI'S WISH?

I WILL HUNT DOWN HIS ENEMY WITH YOU.
AND WHEN THE TIME COMES TO EXACT REVENGE,
OUR WHIRLDWIND WILL COME IN HANDY.
IF THAT'S HOW IT IS, I WANT TO LEND MY STRENGTH.
I GET IT.
OTSUYA ...
I WANT TO HELP HIM FINALLY FULFILL HIS WISH NO MATTER WHAT.
OYOU.
THANK YOU, OTSUYA ...
THANK YOU,
AFTER THAT, OYOU AND I WOULD OFTEN GO OVER TO IORI'S HOUSE TOGETHER.
OYOU WAS COMPLETELY HOPELESS AT COOKING,
I COULDN'T JUST LET HER GIVE IORI BURNT FOOD, AFTER ALL.
I'M VERY GRATEFUL, TO BOTH OF YOU...
OH MY, THERE'S NO NEED TO BE SO HUMBLE.

WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS IORI?
IORI WAS...
ALTHOUGH HE WAS WEAKEND BY ILLNESS, HE WAS SUCH A GOOD MAN HE COULD SEND SHIVERS DOWN YOUR SPINE.
IT WAS FUN UNTIL THEN.
OYOU, IORI, AND I...
WE COULE LEAN ON EACH OTHER'S SHOULDERS AS WE WERE ALL BEARING THE BURDEN OF BEING OUTCASTS ...
IT WAS TRULY FUN...
IF HE HADN'T BEEN ILL,
I'M SURE THAT NO WOMAN COULD LEAVE HIM ALONE.
THAT OYOU FELL FOR HIM AT FIRST GLANCE WAS NATURAL.
YOU WANT TO GIVE THIS COMB TO ME?
IT'S A MEMENTO OF MY SISTER. PLEASE, USE IT.
OH, I COULDN'T ...

I WILL TAKE GOOD CARE OF THIS COMB.
IORI ...
I THANK YOU AND OYOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART.
OTSUYA, YOU'RE SUCH A BIG HELP.
HEH?
YOU'RE MORE PERCEPTIVE THAN YOU LOOK.
...
YOU DIDN'T FALL FOR IORI AS WELL, DID YOU?
HUH ...?
YOU?
I WAS HONESTLY JEALOUS OF OYOU.
MY HEART RACED LIKE A LITTLE GIRL.
THOUGHT IT WAS UNLIKE ME, JUST BY MEETING HIS EYES MY CHEST WOULD SWELL.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.

EVEN SO, I CRUSHED THOSE FEELINGS.
I DID THE ADMIRABLE THING AND PUT THE FEELINGS OF OYOU AND IORI FIRST, HONESTLY TRYING TO HELP THEM.
OTHERWISE I MAY HAVE HATED OYOU AND KILLED HER WTH THE WHIRLWIND.
WITH A FEELING SIMILAR TO FEAR, I PUSHED DOWN THOSE FEELINGS MYSELF.
YES, I WAS SOFT-HEARTED.
NOT KNOW-ING OYOU'S ...
THAT WOMAN'S FEARSOME TRUE IDENTITY...
OYOU'S TRUE IDENTITY?
BOY, I WAS KILLED BY OYOU.
THAT'S NOT ALL. THAT WOMAN TOOK CARE OF IORI WITH HER OWN HANDS.
IN SUCH A TERRIBLE WAY THAT NOT EVEN HIS SOUL SURVIVED.
HER TRUE IDENTITY IS THAT OF A DEMON.

SHE IS AS FRIGHT-ENING AS A DEMON.
TAKE CARE, BOY.
OR YOU, TOO, MIGHT BE KILLED BY THAT WOMAN...
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW EVERY-THING ELSE,
REMOVE THE SEAL.
ONLY ONE REMAINS ...
IT'S THE LAST ONE...
UH ...
THIS IS THE KIMONO THAT IORI'S SISTER WAS WEARING ON HER FINAL DAY.

TELL ME.
WHO KILLED YOU?
TELL ME.

THOSE ARE THE MEN WHO WORK FOR THE SHOGUN THAT GRABBED ME AT THE TEA HOUSE...
HOW AWFUL ...
THOSE MEN DID THAT TO IORI'S SISTER...
THOSE ARE THE ENEMIES THAT IORI HAS BEEN PURSUING...
IORI!
I KNOW!
I KNOW WHO THE MEN ARE THAT -
BATTLE
IORI?
IORI!

IS SHE DREAMING OF THAT IORI AGAIN...?
OYOU'S HAVING A NIGHT-MARE.
UH...
...MM.
RIIP
THIS IS THE LAST SEAL...
CRASH
SWITCH
SAJI!

I...
JUST WANTED TO KNOW!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE ...?
ABOUT YOUR PAST, EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU...
BECAUSE I LOVE YOU!
FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART!
UGH ...
SAJI!
STOMP
I WAS CARE-LESS.
WHILE I WAS SLEEPING,
HE WAS AFFECTED BY THE GHOSTLY POWER INSIDE.

SO TELL ME LIKE YOU PROMISED!
TELL ME ALL ABOUT OYOU!
OTSU-YA!
OTSUYA! COME OUT!
I'VE REMOVED ALL OF THE SEALS!
I WILL TELL YOU JUST AS PROMISED.
COME, FOLLOW ME.
...
SHE IS...
KAZZ
JUST LIKE SHE IS STILL A LIVING HUMAN BEING...
THANKS TO YOU, ALL OF MY POWERS HAVE BEEN RELEASED.
YOU DID WELL, BOY.

WHY HERE?
IN ORDER TO TELL YOU THE LAST PART, THERE IS NO MORE APPROPRIATE PLACE THAN HERE.
THIS IS WHERE IORI'S HOME WAS.
THOUGH NOW IT IS IN A SORRY STATE.
THAT DAY, 8 YEARS AGO...
OYOU CAME TO ME SUDDENLY.
AND SHE TOLD ME SOMETHING SHOCKING.
OTSUYA, IORI WAS FINALLY ABLE TO TRACK DOWN HIS SISTER'S KILLERS.
OYOU, THAT MEANS ...
YES, IORI WAS FINALLY ABLE TO EXACT HIS GLORIOUS REVENGE.
HE STRUCK ALL THREE OF THE SHOGUN'S MEN DOWN WITH A SINGLE STRIKE...
OH MY, OYOU.
HOW COULD YOU NOT TELL ME?
DIDN'T I SAY THAT I WOULD HELP?
NO. IORI AND I NO LONGER WISH TO HAVE ANY RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU.

OYOU? WHAT'S WRONG?
HOW COULD YOU SAY THAT?
ANYWAY, DON'T COME TO IORI'S HOME ANY MORE, PLEASE.
OYOU!?
I KNEW RIGHT AWAY
THAT SHE KNEW ABOUT MY FEELINGS FOR IORI THAT I HAD KEPT HIDDEN THE WHOLE TIME...
THAT'S WHY SHE CHANGED HER MIND SO SUDDENLY...
SHE ALSO SOON QUIT THE TEA HOUSE.
AND SHE NO LONGER SHOWED HER FACE TO ME.
THEY HOLED THEMSELVES UP IN THIS HOUSE TOGETHER.
THE DOOR WAS SHUT TIGHT, AND STRANGE SEALS WERE PLASTERED ALL OVER THE OUSIDE OF THE HOUSE.
ALMOST AS IF THEY WERE TRYING TO KEEP ME OUT.
I WAS ALSO WORRIED ABOUT IORI'S ILLNESS.
AFTER THAT, I ALSO QUIT MY JOB.
I WOULD JUST WANDER AROUND THE HOUSE AIMLESSLY
AS THE DAYS WENT BY, WITHIN ME THE LONELINESS
ANGER TOWARD OYOU AND HATRED GREW STRONGER.

AND THEN MY CHANCE ARRIVED.
I SAW OYOU LEAVE
TO DO SHOPPING OR SOMETHING.
I HURRIED AND JUMPED INTO THE HOUSE.
...
IORI!
RATTLE
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.
I HEARD THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO DEFEAT YOUR FOES.
CONGRATULATIONS.
UM ...
HOW ARE YOU?
I HAVE BEEN WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
...
GRAB
UM..
IORI?

AH, SO IORI KNEW ABOUT MY FEELINGS...
THAT'S WHY HE IS SO... PASSIONATE...
THE MAN THAT I HAD SECRETLY ADORED ALL THIS TIME...
MY HEART WAS SUDDENLY FILLED WITH JOY.
WITH A HOT, STRONG POWER ...
SUDDENLY, IORI PULLED ME CLOSE AND HELD ME DOWN.
RATTLE
AND THEN ... IT HAPPENED.
MY LONG-HIDDEN FEELINGS FOR IORI WERE RELEASED ALL AT ONCE...
I CLUNG TO IORI SO VERY CLOSELY.
AND IT HELPED MY REVENGE AGAINST OYOU.
GASP
OYOU ...?

RIP
RIP
RIP
GLARE
I DIDN'T HAVE THE TIME TO USE THE WHIRLWIND.
I WAS TORN APART BY OYOU'S EVIL POWER.
AND AS MY CONSCIOUSNESS DRIFTED AWAY, I'M SURE I SAW IT.

STAB
SHE WASN'T SATISFIED JUST KILLING ME.
NEXT, SHE EVEN KILLED IORI...
I HAD NEVER SEEN SUCH A FRIGHTENING SCENE BEFORE IN MY LIFE.
IORI'S BODY SUDDENLY FELL APART, HIS BONES AND VERY SOUL DISAPPEARED...
THAT WOMAN COULD NOT FORGIVE THE FACT THAT IORI
...
HAD A CHANGE OF HEART.

...
THIS IS THE EVERYTHING THAT YOU WANTED TO KNOW, BOY.
AFTER THAT, OYOU LOCKED MY SOUL INTO THAT COMB.
AND THEN SHE LOCKED IT AWAY IN THAT BOX.
FWP
AND NOW, I WILL LET YOU TASTE THE POWER OF MY WHIRLWIND.
YOU KNOW, I'VE BEEN WATCHING HER THIS WHOLE TIME FROM INSIDE THE BOX.
WH-
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
AFTER KILLING IORI,
SHE WENT FROM ONE MAN TO THE NEXT,
AND NOW SHE'S DECEIVED ANOTHER YOUNG MAN LIKE YOU.
IF I KILL YOU, I BELIEVE THAT SHE'D BE AT LEAST A LITTLE SAD...
THAT'S THE KIND OF WOMAN SHE IS.
I CAN'T FORGIVE OYOU...

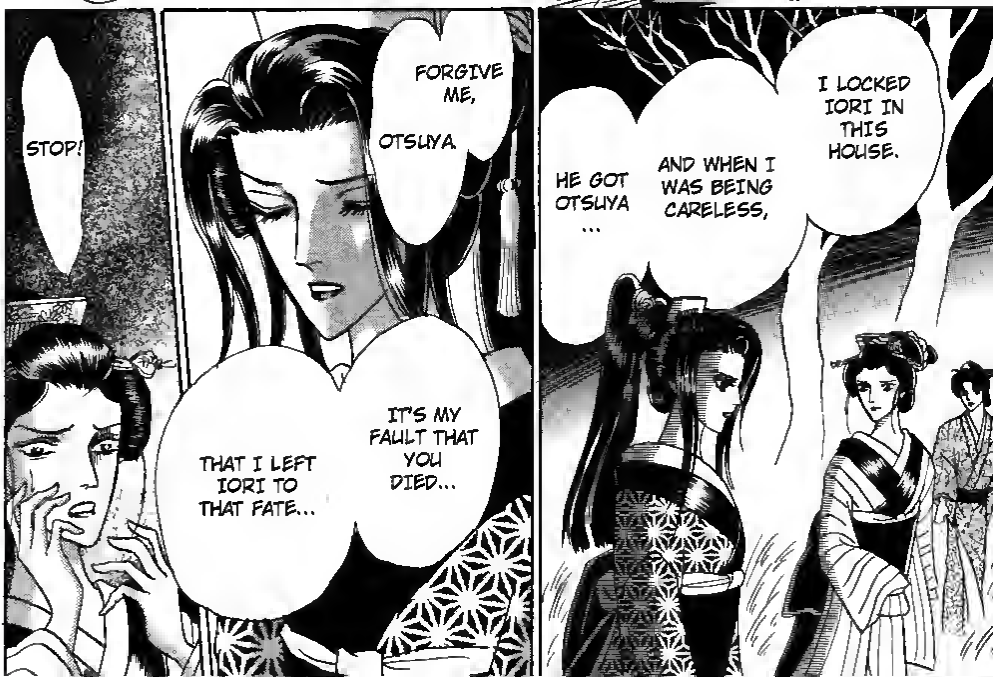
EEK!
I CAN'T FORGIVE HER, NO MATTER WHAT!
STOP!
I KNEW YOU'D COME, OYOU.
YOU'RE PERCEP-TIVE.
I KNEW YOU'D FIGURE WE CAME HERE.
OTSUYA.
SAJI HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO KILL SOMEONE, KILL ME.
OYOU ...?

HMPH.
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU TO SAY SOMETHING SO HONORABLE.
DON'T WORRY. AFTER HIM, IT WILL BE YOUR TURN.
COUGH COUGH
I CAN SEE THAT YOUR BODY IS QUITE WEAK.
YOU CAN'T DEFEAT ME HOW YOU ARE NOW.
OTSUYA!
YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG!
I WASN'T THE ONE WHO KILLED YOU!
YOU CAN JUST SIT THERE AND WATCH.
I'LL KILL YOUR PRECIOUS LITTLE BOY.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
WHAT'S WITH THE EXCUSES NOW?
REMEMBER, OTSUYA!
YES,
TRY TO REMEMBER AFTER ALL THIS TIME.
BACK THEN,
THE ONE WHO TORE YOUR BODY APART WAS...

GRAB
OYOU ?
RIP
RIP
RIP
NO ...
IORI ... DID?
NO WAY ...
AT THE TIME, IORI WAS ALREADY DEAD...

THAT DAY HE FOUND HIS SISTER'S KILLERS,
IORI PASSED AWAY FROM LOSS OF BLOOD.
I THOUGHT OF IORI NO LONGER HAVING ANY THOUGHTS,
AND COULDN'T STOP THE PAIN NO MATTER WHAT.
I USED FORBIDDEN MAGIC ON IORI'S DEAD BODY.
A SPELL TO BRING BACK THE DEAD...
BUT THE REVIVED IORI
WAS NO LONGER IORI.
HE KILLED PEOPLE,
HE RAPED WOMEN,
ATE THE FLESH AND BLOOD OF ANIMALS ...
HE HAD COMPLETELY CHANGED INTO A MONSTER WITHOUT EVEN A HINT OF A HUMAN HEART.
AND THIS WAY IORI REGAINED HIS BREATH.
THE PERFUME OF RETURN-ING SOULS ...
GRIND THEM DOWN AND APPLY TO THE BODY ...
A MIXTURE OF 10 KINDS OF SECRET MEDICINES.
BENZOIN,
LOVAGE ROOT,
WHITE POPPY,

I SUCCESSFULLY SICCED IORI ON HIS SISTER'S KILLERS.
AFTER THEY WERE KILLED, THE ONLY THING IN MY HEART WAS REGRET AND EMPTINESS.
I KNEW THAT THE SITUATION COULDN'T GO ON.
BUT EVEN KNOWING THAT, I JUST COULDN'T KILL IORI.
BECAUSE A SOUL THAT HAS BEEN BROUGHT BACK DIES AND DISAPPEARS FOREVER AFTER THE NEXT DEATH.
YES ...
IT IS MY FAULT THAT IORI CAN NOT BE REINCARNATED OR MOVE ON TO THE AFTERLIFE.
HIS SOUL WOULD SIMPLY VANISH FOREVER.


I LOCKED IORI IN THIS HOUSE.
AND WHEN I WAS BEING CARELESS,
HE GOT OTSUYA ...
FORGIVE ME, OTSUYA.
STOP!
IT'S MY FAULT THAT YOU DIED...
THAT I LEFT IORI TO THAT FATE...

YES,
SO ...
IORI LOVED ME!
STOP, STOP!
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT!
IT'S A LIE!
IORI WAS NOT THE ONE WHO KILLED ME...
OTSU-YA...
RIP
RIIP
LIGH ...
LIES!
YOU'RE ALL LIARS!
I'LL KILL YOU!
ALL OF YOU!
I'LL KILL YOU!
WOOSH
WOOSH
WOOSH
SAJI!

OYOU...? WHAT DID YOU DO...?
TWITCH
AH ...
NEXT I'LL CUT THAT WINDPIPE OF YOURS.
HAND THAT OVER!
SORRY ...
SNAP
OTSUYA, I'M SORRY!

NOW... EVEN OTSUYA'S SOUL WILL HAVE DISAPPEARED FOREVER.
I'VE TRAVELED WITH THIS COMB SEALED IN THE BOX.
I THOUGHT SOME DAY I COULD HELP HER MOVE ON TO HEAVEN.
BUT NOW...
AAAAH
NOOOOO!!!
SORRY ... OTSU-YA.
I'M SORRY ...
OYOU ...
EVERYONE HAS SOMETHING IN THEIR PAST
THAT THEY DON'T WANT ANYONE ELSE TO KNOW ABOUT...

OH SAJI, YOU REALLY HELPED ME OUT!
THE OLD MAN AT THE SOBA SHOP RECOVERED.
AFTER A WHILE,
THE COLD EPIDEMIC IN EDO DIED DOWN.
THE SLEEPING TOUKA FINALLY AWOKE
AND WENT TO SCREW AROUND SOME-WHERE FOR A FEW DAYS.
IT SEEMS HE'S FOUND A GIRL IN YOSHIHARA.
COUGH
COUGH
AND I BECAME THE ONLY PERSON TO BE LAID UP IN BED, TRYING TO RECOVER FROM BOTH A COLD AND WOUNDS FROM THE WHIRLWIND.
SAJI, I MADE SOME RICE GRUEL.
AND OYOU FINALLY RECOVERED AS WELL.
I WAS SURPRISED AT HOW KIND OYOU WAS TO ME.
I HAD ALWAYS BEEN HOPING TO SEE THAT SIDE OF HER.
IF YOU MADE IT, I'LL EAT ANYTHING ...
I... WILL.
WILL YOU EAT IT?
I MAY HAVE BURNT IT AGAIN,
BUT EVEN SO, I WAS KIND OF GLAD.
IT WAS PERFECTLY GOOD PUNISHMENT FOR HOW STUPID I WAS.

I'M SORRY, OYOU.
I MADE IT SO THE SOUL OF OTSUYA TRULY DISAPPEARED FOREVER.
I MADE YOU FEEL PAIN FROM THE PAST ALL OVER AGAIN.
NO, I'M SURE THAT EVEN NOW, THAT WOMAN IS CRYING OUT IN PAIN.
HYUUU
TAKING THE FORM OF THE WIND...
ARE YOU OKAY?
YEAH.
PFT
YUCK.

VOL. IX THE WHIRLWIND - END

JOUR COMICS
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